

Halo: the Shroud of the Dark Side

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Category: Halo

Genre: Adventure

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2006-01-27 02:04:38

Updated: 2006-06-04 17:44:33

Packaged: 2016-04-26 23:32:29

Rating: K+

Chapters: 19

Words: 34,992

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: A HaloSW cross over. Five years after the fall of the Old Covenant.FINISHED. R&R! NOTE: STAY TUNED FOR A SNEAK PEEK OF THE SEQUEL!

1. Chapter 1: First Contact

Summary: Halo SW crossover. 5 yrs after the destruction of the Prophets' Covenant, the New Covenant consisting of the Sangheli, the Legkolo, and the Ungoyy has made peace with the UNSC, though relations are admittedly shaky, due to the UNSC rebuilding it's empire. Then something happens that will strengthen their unity. The Empire never really cared about the UN-Covenant war, until Darth Vader decides to capture Earth, because it had vast natural resources and it was perfect for constructing the third Death Star far from the prying eyes of the Rebel Alliance. On the way, Vader wants to subdue the New Covenant. But what he doesn't realize is that the Sangheli are no pushovers, and Earth's inferior weapons may be more dangerous than he thought.

Chapter 1

Year 2557, December 17, 1316 hrs Earth Standard time

Avenger-class Imperial Frigate "Conqueror"

On Approach to Sangheli Homeworld Forunpo

"Captain, we have the Covenant planet in visual range," said a gray-uniformed operative.

Captain Gran Reem, a middle-aged man, walked towards the bridge's plastisteel view port. "Magnify," he barked.

The planet seemed to jump towards them. It was beautiful, Reem had to admit. Then he noticed something in orbit. He said "Magnify that

object in orbit." It was a ship. A strange, silver elongated-teardrop shaped thing. The helmsman interrupted his thoughts.

"Sir, we are within their sensor range."

"Hold position," said Reem. As soon as the _Conqueror _stopped, the alien ship left orbit and accelerated towards them.

**New Covenant Destroyer "Holy Blade" **

"It looks like a Human ship, Arbiter," said the Elite at the helm.

The Arbiter was worried. It couldn't be a Human ship. They didn't get that big. By the gods, it was three times as large as _Holy Blade. _But if it was Human, there was no need to worry; the alliance had seen to that. So why was he worried?

"Try to contact them with the Human bandwidth."

"Arbiter, they are using _our _bandwidth."

This was strange, he had to admit. "Put them on the main holotank."

"Sir, they have opened a channel."

"Put them on," said Captain Reem. When the image came, he tried not to show too much disgust at the alien face and the four mandibles. But, however grotesque the face was, the deep voice that emanated from the holo's speakers sounded very educated.

"I am the Arbiter of the New Covenant," it said. "Who are you, and what is your purpose here?"

Reem took a deep breath and replied, "I am Captain Gran Reem of the Imperial frigate _Conqueror._ I am under orders from the Emperor, the leader of the Galactic Empire, to find the location of a planet called 'Earth'."

The creature who called himself the Arbiter had a look of surprise on it's face, which quickly passed.

"Let me speak with your 'Emperor'," it said.

2. Chapter 2: First Fight

**1320 hrs**

**UNSC Super Destroyer "Jacob Keyes"**

**On Approach to Forunpo**

"Ares, bring us out of Slipspace," said Captain William Sherman.

"Aye sir," replied the AI. "Exiting Slipspace in five."

Pinpricks of light enveloped the ship as it made its exit from the

non-Einsteinien realm.

"Ares, what the hell is going on there?" asked Sherman, pointing at a battle between a strange ship and the New Covenant flagship _Holy Blade. _

"_Holy Blade_ has engaged aâ€" "

"Cut the chatter Ares. Bring the ship up to Combat Alert Alpha. Scramble all the fighters and have them target that tower structure. We're engaging that ship."

"Harding!"

"Yes sir!" replied a man at Weapons Ops.

"Arm Archer missile pods A through F and aâ€" "

"Sir," interrupted a man at Radar, "They're launching their single fighters."

"Harding, A through F and target their Launch Bay."

"Done sir."

"Fire!"

****_Aboard Imperial Frigate "Conqueror"_****

Reem was happy with the current progress of the battle. The Covenant had been taken by surprise by his vicious attack. They had taken heavy damage before the filthy animals raised their shields. Now the TIEs were in combat against the scarab-like covenant fighters

"Sir, new contact off starboard, inbound. At current speed ETA is three minutes till weapons range."

"Magnify."

The ship looked nothing like a Covenant ship. It was larger than the ship that they were engaging. There was writing on the side.

"Magnify that writing."

It read: ****UNSC JACOB KEYES****

"UNSC," he muttered. "Could these be the Earthlings?"

"Sir! They have fired at us and are launching their fighters!"

"Where are those missiles headed?"

"Towards the starboard launching bays. Impact in five."

Reem paled. "Raise shieâ€" "

Too late.

**Aboard UNSC Super Destroyer "Jacob Keyes"**

Fire blossomed inside the strange ship's launch bays as the Archers impacted. Sherman smiled. He knew that they would have to lower their shields to launch their fighters. The Longsword fighter/bombers were strafing the tower and _Holy Blade _had taken advantage of the enemies' confusion by firing a pulse lazer gutting the strange ship stem to stern. He But it was still moving.

"Harding, arm all three MAC guns and Archer missile pods G through L. Ares give me a firing solution that has the missiles impacting with the MAC rounds."

"Done sir."

"Fire at will."

Three dull thumps resounded through the ship's hull, then six more as the Archers fired a few seconds later.

**Aboard Imperial Frigate "Conqueror"**

Reem got up shakily. "Da-damage report," he panted.

"Hull breached along nearly all the starboard side. Thousands dead. Also, the Covenant fired a sort of beam cannon, holing us from bow to stern."

BOOM!

"What was that!"

"It must have been one of their bombersâ€¦ oh no."

>"What?"
"They're shearing off."

Reem turned even more pale. He didn't need the dead weapons officer to tell him what that meant. He looked out the view port and saw three white hot projectiles followed by six missiles. Reem closed his eyes.

"I hope the emperor forgives me."

The _Conqueror _exploded.

3. Chapter 3: The Calm before the Storm

Thanks for all the reviews! And especially SpartanCommander, you've given me an idea.

And now, without any further delay, I give youâ€¦

Chapter 3

**Kamino**

**Three days later**

"Admiral Olie, I told you to sent **ten **ships, not one. Do you want

to die that badly?" rumbled the black- armored figure. The man before him was sweating so profusely it looked like he had wet himself.

"I-I didn't-I-I ordered Captain Reem not to engage, m-my lord," stuttered the wretched man.

"And yet he did."

"I-Iâ€¦"

"I knew Reem. He wasn't one to disobey orders, even from doddering wrecks like you."

"I-I assure you Lord Vaderâ€¦"

The black figure raised his hand and clenched it. Admiral Olie began to choke. "I do not require your assurance. In fact ****you ****are no longer required." Vader watched as Olie's limp form hit the ground, his neck bent at an odd angle. Darth Vader turned to another man who stood beside him. "Admiral Piett, you have seen the price of failure. Do not give me reason to make you pay that price."

Piett's face betrayed no emotion. "As you wish, Lord Vader." He motioned to two stormtroopers to take the bodies.

Darth Vader turned back to Piett. "Admiral, I want you to take three battle groups to Forunpo, to provide a distraction. Another five battle groups will accompany me to this planet, designated 'Chiron TL34'."

"That doesn't sound like a Covenant name."

"Indeed it isn't. This is the only UNSC planet registered within Imperial Intelligence. Our scouts have reported that it is weakly protected. We will take it by force, then every R2 unit we have will hack into their database and find the location of Earth. It will not be long before the Empire is restored to it's former glory"

"And the New Republic will fall."

**Chiron TL34**

**ONI "CASTLE VII" Base**

**Four days later**

"Up boot!" barked MCPO John-117. The boy in the cot in front of him feigned sleep. John sighed, and buzzed him with his buzz baton. The boy sat up immediately. "I said up, boot. Up means on your feet!" The boy stood up, looking at John with pure venom in his eyes. "That's the way to do it. Now move! To the showers! Double time!"

He had started training these boys only to have something to do. The Covenant war was over. If John had had his way, the UNSC would have gone further and wiped out the New Covenant too. But they were now friends. The Arbiter had nearly given his life to protect Earth, and a thousand Elites had aided in rescuing civilians from the Flood in New Mombasa. It earned him an honorary UEG citizenship and a Medal of Honor. John had gotten one too. Sergeant Johnson had said they would

probably have to pin it on his pants, due to the amount of medals John had accumulated.

One day full of whining babies later, John flopped on the bed. Kids. He should probably put that on his 'most dangerous enemies' list. His comm suddenly went off. "Master Chief Spartan 117."

"Chief! This is Admiral Watts. Get your ass down here. And get your armor too. Be there or it's your ass. Watts out."

**2357 hrs**

**Imperial Star Destroyer "Vengeance"**

**In orbit around Chiron TL34**

Darth Vader looked at the image of a UNSC Admiral.

"_This is Admiral James Watts. If you don't mind my asking, who the hell are you?"_

"This is Lord Vader of the Galactic Empire. Iâ€ requestâ€ that you stand down your defenses and surrender. Now."

Watts chuckled. _"You don't seriously believe for a second that we're gonna listen to you? Well let me tell you something. We spotted you coming through slipspace. Right now, there are ten UNSC ships heading this way."_

"By the time they reach here, your base will be molten slag."

"_I don't think so. Our MAC cannons can put a hole clean through your ships before you can sneeze."_

"We will see." Vader turned off the holo and turned to his captain. "Captain, tell General Werrs to prepare his troops. Target those cannons. I want that planet under Imperial control in two days maximum. Do not fail, or you will regret ever being born."

Watts was giving orders as soon as the holotank went off. "I want those Super MACs warmed up and ready to fire. All pilots should scramble and all Marine forces should mobilize."

"All of them, sir? That'll be five hundred troops."

"Yes. Considering our opponent's strength, that may not be enough."

4. Chapter 4: The Battle for Chiron

Chapter 4

**0007 hrs**

**Chiron TL34**

**Aboard Imperial Star Destroyer "Vengeance"**

_Vengeance _shook as a Super MAC round blasted against their shields.

The bridge crew stumbled. The only one who seemed not to be affected was a black armored figure.

"Captain, may I request that you pay more attention to our safety? Having this ship destroyed with me on board will put quite a cramp in our campaign, don't you think?"

"Yes Lord Vader." The Captain turned to an officer. "Have all batteries target that MAC station. This will provide an opening for General Werr's transports."

"Yes sir."

Seconds later, the MAC platform exploded. Vader shook his head. He had expected to land troops over an hour ago. But that Watts was a tactical genius. While Vader was talking to him, the UNSC officer had launched a crude version of a neutron bomb and it had floated undetected into the midst of their fleet. As soon as Avenger had started firing, the bomb had detonated. The whole fleet's shields went down for five minutes.

Which was a very bad thing for Strike group 1.

Avenger was the first ship to be destroyed, having been hit multiple times by the MACs. Palpatine's Hand was next; a lucky round hit the ship's reactors and the Hand turned into a momentary sun. Five other ships were disabled, and every other ship had sustained quite a bit of damage.

But now, the Imperials had gotten their act together. The loss of an MAC platform was a serious blow to the UNSC defense grid, and now hundreds of transports were pouring through the gap.

"Contact Watts," rumbled Vader, "he may have second thoughts"

Watts appeared. "Don't tell me, you want my surrender."

"You'll be lucky if you get off as easily as that."

"The answer is no, and will be no, even if you have a gun to my head."

"Your spatial tactics are impressive, but soon you will have other concerns. A thousand stormtroopers are on their way right now.

Watts smiled. "That's all? Vader, you said we were good in space. Were even better on the ground."

0200 hrs

Chiron TL34

Imperial camp, 98 miles east of "CASTLE VII"

TH-313 sighed. Sentry duty. The only thing worst than the Rebels. He was told to keep an eye out for anything. But right now, he was eyeing the pretty female officer strolling by. He had eyes only for her. Suddenly, someone tapped his helmet.

"You aren't allowed to drool in your helmet, 313."

313 turned to face his partner, 344. "Why not?"

"Because were supposed to look out for Earth forces, not checking out Illia Daala."

313 gulped. "You meanâ€¦"

"Yup, she's Admiral Daala's sister. If she found out about your infatuation, she'd toss you to Kessel."

313 decided to change the subject. "You think those Earthers are gonna be tough?"

"Nah, they don't even have blasters. We'll be back home in no time."

Just then, Officer Daala came up. "Be prepared. Our scouts report that the Earthers are preparing a counter attack."

Within five minutes, the sentry guard of two swelled to fifty. They kept their blasters trained on the high ridge. Ready for anything.

Except for the five Warthogs that leaped off the ridge, treads spinning and chainguns firing.

John smiled. He had anticipated that the camp's defense would be strengthened. Major Patel didn't want to waste any of the Scorpion MBTs, and had modeled a plan based on Great Britain's Desert Rats, crack soldiers of WWII who would ride jeeps straight into Nazi camps and raise all sorts of hell.

Which was what the Spartans and Marines were doing to the Imperials.

John's 'Hog landed on the unfortunate guards like the proverbial 'ton of bricks', and Private Lee was having a field day mowing down the opposition.

"That's one way to save ammo!" Lee yelled as the Master Chief drove straight into another patrol.

Kelly-087, Will-043 and Frederic-104 were wreaking havoc among the Imperial tanks with their Gauss cannon. Judging by the smoke, at least eleven of the forty tanks had been destroyed or disabled.

A stray blaster bolt hit the Chief, then another. Then he was hit five times more, and his shield bar dropped slightly. Damn. Their aim was getting better.

A quartet of shots rang out, and four stormtroopers with rocket launchers fell to the ground. John knew who had fired those shots. Linda-058 was arguably the best sniper in the UNSC, and was known to pull off near impossible shots. John noticed one of the tanks coming to life. The turret on top fired something like a Sentinel's laser, only green. It narrowly missed his head.

"Alright every body, were leaving. Let's go!"

As they drove away, John looked back at the chaos. The Imperials would be distracted long enough for Major Patel to finish setting up the defenses. Another mission completed.

Lieutenant Daala woke up to find herself in sick bay. The shock wave of the Gauss cannon rounds had knocked her unconscious. She got up, brushed past the med droids who were trying to convince her to rest, took a speeder, and went to the ATAT that served as General Werr's HQ.

"Lieutenant Daala, what a pleasant surprise," said Werr's with a smile.

"With all due respect, sir, I've had enough surprises for one day."

"You mean the UNSC raid, hmm?" Daala nodded.

"They are very resourceful, hmm?" Daala nodded again.

"I suspect this raid was to delay our attack on their base. We won't be able to mobilize for another seven hours."

Daala cleared her throat. "I took a good look at some of those soldiers. They wear different armor than the other Earthers. And, if this can be believed, they have personal shield generators."

At this, Werr's grew serious. "I must report this to Lord Vader. Do you have video feed of these special soldiers?"

Daala gave him a data disk. Werr's shook his head in disbelief. "Personal shield generators. This hasn't happened since the Clone Wars. I fear this battle will take longer than expected."

Vader was very interested in the data disk's content. So much so that he decided to use his precious black troopers (Elite Dark troopers) to deal with this new menace. "I don't care what it takes," he told the leader of the black troopers, known only as E-1, "destroy these super soldiers, and try to capture one. Do not fail."

Inside his black helmet, E-1 smiled. "Consider it done, Lord Vader."

Ten minutes later, a hundred black troopers left for the surface of Chiron TL34. Above them, it was complete carnage as the UNSC fleet desperately tried to hold its own against the might of the Empire.

5. Chapter 5: Beginning of Despair

Chapter 5

**0415 hrs**

**UNSC Super Destroyer "Titan"**

**In Battle above Chiron TL34**

Admiral Stanley Whitcomb got up to his feet after a turbolaser

barrage slammed into his ship, knocking him to the floor. "Damn." This was the third time in the battle he had found himself kissing the deck plates, and he decided that repayment was long due for the Imperials. "Status, Vishnu."

The four-armed AI's figure flickered into existence. "Fifteen percent of ballistic weaponry is down. Twenty Archer missiles left. Fifty MAC rounds. Armor down to seventy percent."

"Goddammit. Wait, you said ballistic weapons?"

"Yes sir."

"What about those plasma upgrades the Covenant gave us?"

"Fully operational, sir. But they have not been tested. There are risksâ€¦"

"Power up all plasma weapons. Target that tower structure. You say that's their bridge, Vishnu?"

"Yes, that appears to be their command and control."

"Pulse lasers on my mark."

"Plasma turrets are warmed up, sir."

"Fire turrets two, three and four on my mark."

A pause.

"Mark!"

Three blue-white lines of plasma struck the nearest Star Destroyer's bridge. Their shields flickered for a moment before they overloaded and burned out.

"Fire turrets five and six."

The lines of plasma burned through the enemy ship like so much tissue paper. The command bridge was lopped off by one pulse laser, while the other disabled the ship's engines. It wasn't exactly Whitcomb's plan, but it worked out better than he thought. The "headless" star destroyer plowed straight into another ship, nearly shearing it in half, before they both exploded. The ensuing explosion destroyed another two ships and severely damaged a third.

"Four ships, for the price of one," remarked Vishnu. "Not bad, Admiral."

"I'm gonna make it five kills. Target that damaged ship. Fire turrets seven and eight."

The targeted ship was destroyed without remorse.

"Vishnu, how many ships are left in our fleet and theirs?"

"Five and eleven, respectively."

Whitcomb cursed. This was getting worse by the second. "Open a secure

channel to HighCom on Zeta Doradus. Tell them we need reinforcements on the double."

"Negative Admiral. I cannot establish contact with Zeta Doradus at this time. It's too far away."

That was bad, because Zeta Doradus was the closest planet to Chiron. Human planet that is.

"What's the nearest Covenant planet?"

"Gangan."

"I don't have time for bullshit."

"Gangan is the home planet of the Ungoyy."

"The who?"

"The Grunts."

The Grunts. The diminutive little soldiers of the Covenant. Dangerous in numbers, but individually cowards.

"What will they do? Say 'Grunts to the rescue'? They're completely useless in this situation."

"An Elite garrison is stationed there. A fleet of twenty Covenant cruisers is also present."

"Try and contact them. Tell them if they don't come, the enemy will have all information concerning their home planets. And they'll be as good as dead."

**0533 hrs**

**New Covenant Cruiser "Restored Honor"**

**In orbit around Gangan**

Muki 'Satumee stood at the bridge of his ship, feeling very bored. Nothing could be more boring than patrolling the Ungoyy planet. The only ones who were happy were the Ungoyy, who were getting some shore leave. The well meaning leader of the Ungoyy had told him of the lush beauty of Ganganâ€| for all the good it did him. He couldn't breathe methane. So he was stuck here. A voice interrupted his thoughts.

"Ship Master, we are receiving a transmission an the Human Bandwidth."

"Patch it through."

A garbled transmission came through.

"Thisâ€|NSCâ€|Chironâ€|sieged... requireâ€|mediate assisâ€|ance. Repeat, weâ€|under attack."

"Strange," said 'Satumee, "there is no remainder of the Old Covenant." He opened a log that he had neglected to open, one he couldn't open due to a systems malfunction. It detailed the

_Conqueror's _attack on Forunpo, and the destruction of a new Imperial fleet that had attempted to attack his home world. The nine ship task force had run into a five hundred-strong New Covenant fleet. They had been destroyed without mercy. 'Satumee relayed the message to the Fleet Commander, Gan 'Artumee, who wasted no time in preparing the ships for jump. The Ungoyy were less than happy about having their leave cancelled, but they came aboard nonetheless. Within an hour, the twenty-ship fleet was ready.

"_All ships, lay in a course to Chiron TL34. Be prepared for battle. At long last we go to war."_

All the Sangheli felt joy. They were born warriors. Their place was in the battle.

They were going home.

One Ungoyy, however, one named Yayap, muttered sarcastically, "At long last we go back to being cannon fodder," prompting several Ungoyy to laugh and a blue armored Elite to slap him across the face.

**0738 hrs**

**UNSC Super Destroyer "Titan"**

**In battle above Chiron TL34**

Admiral Stanley Whitcomb's ship was on the verge of collapse, but the UNSC flagship was giving as good as it got: one star destroyer was a lifeless hulk while another was limping away from the battle severely damaged. But the nine other ships were covering _Titan's _every escape vector. The Admiral had all non-essential personnel evac'd, and there was only one lifeboat left, enough for an Admiral, a helmsman, and three Spartans.

"Cassandra, how many Archers are left?"

"None, sir," replied the female Spartan. "MAC rounds also depleted. Plasma turrets have melted due to overcharge. We only have the 50mm cannons."

Whitcomb shook his head. "Damn, we might as well go out and kick them."

An alarmed suddenly warbled, joining the din of several others.

"Neil, what the hell just happened?"

"An enemy dropship, or what passes as one, has just landed in the starboard hangar bay. About twenty hostiles are approaching the bridge, along with some sort of robot," said the Spartan. "My guess is that they are gonna go for the nav databanks."

"Now we can't let that happen can we? Ares, purge the databanks of any information concerning UNSC and New Covenant planets and their location. Irradiate all memory crystal. Authorization Whitcomb, Stanley, Admiral, Alpha-niner niner."

"Done, Sir. It has been an honor working with you."

"Honor's mine, Ares. Set self destruct sequence and give us a two minute countdown."

Whitcomb turned to the three Spartans and the helmsman. "We'd better get our asses off this boat. Schroeder, Spartans, lets move!"

It seemed like more stormtroopers had landed while they had set the self destruct sequence. White armored soldiers tried to cut them off several times, but they were no match for the Spartans. Drake-010 was point, clearing the way with his dual SMGs. The stormtroopers threw what looked like red plasma grenades at them repeatedly, forcing Neil and Cassandra to shield the Admiral and Schroeder with their bodies while Drake found that the grenades could be kicked like a frag grenade. More than often the stormtroopers found their own grenades kicked in their faces. Finally they got to the life boat. They wasted no time getting in.

"Schroeder, punch it."

"Aye sir."

The lifeboat rocketed toward Chiron TL34. Behind them the _Titan's _death engulfed another star destroyer.

"A good ship, and I'll miss her. Schroeder, set a course for Chiron HighCom."

6. Chapter 6: The Turn of the Tide

Once again, thanks for the reviews. They're the fuel for this story. And now, on with the show!

Chapter 6

**0800 hrs**

Longsword Fighter/bomber code-name "Tiger-one"

**In battle above Chiron TL34**

Squadron Leader Jacob "Blazer" Dreyfus knew they were in deep shit when the _Titan _blew itself and another star destroyer to hell. His squadron was the only one left out of the ten in the beginning of the battle. Not that they hadn't gone without a bang. They had managed to disable a star destroyer and destroyed at least five hundred enemy fighters. Those fighters were the most annoying thing he had ever encountered. They had excellent maneuverability, and came in what Samuels refused to call squadrons; he called them swarms. The lack of shields practically nullified these strengths, however, allowing the more heavily armed Longswords to destroy them by the dozens. But there were too many.

Which explained why his was the only squadron left.

"Everyone report in," barked Dreyfus.

"_Tiger-two standing by."_

"_Tiger-three standing by."_

All the way up to _"Tiger-twenty standing by."_

Good. At least he had twenty Longswords with him, enough to do something. But not in orbit.

"Alright, people. We are going to the surface."

"_The surface, sir?"_

"Yes. We can't do squat against those ships. Might as well help out the ground-pounders."

So whatever remained of Tiger Squadron headed planetside, where they would be needed soon.

**0817 hrs**

Imperial Star Destroyer "Vengeance"

**In Orbit around Chiron TL34**

Vader should have been happy. Imperial troops had gained a firm foothold, and the UNSC taskforce had been obliterated with significant casualties, nonetheless. Yet he didn't feel right. The radar tech interrupted his thoughts.

"Sir, there are twenty ships exiting hyperspace."

"What!" said Vader. "Are they ours?"

"No Sir, they appear to be Covenant ships. Wait, Sir, another Covenant fleet is exiting hyperspace. Uhâ€|"

"What is it?"

"I count around five hundred ships, Lord Vader."

Darth Vader, Lord of the Sith, once called the Hero with No Fear, suddenly had a _very _bad feeling about this.

"Lord Vader, what should we do? Lord Vader? He's gone!"

The Captain barked "Locate Lord Vader. Now!"

"Sir, his fighter has just left the hangar and jumped."

And all the Captain could say was, "Oh, kriff."

**0820 hrs**

**ONI "CASTLE VII" Base**

John had no idea why Major Patel had called him to his office, but he felt it wasn't good. He fidgeted in his armor. Major Patel himself looked like he hadn't slept for weeks. "Sir, you requested my presence?"

"Yes, Master Chief. I have bad news. Admiral Whitcomb's taskforce has been destroyed."

John cocked his head quizzically. "Sir, Admiral Whitcomb was killed in 2552, aboard the _Ascendant Justice._"

"He was Danforth Whitcomb. The Admiral I'm talking about is his brother, Stanley. As I was saying, the taskforce has been destroyed. His lifeboat landed in the middle of Imperial territory. From what our AI says, there are three Spartans with him. They haven't been captured yet, but it's only a matter of time. AI Prometheus says that they're around here," he said, pointing at a point almost smack in the middle of enemy territory. "Your mission is to infiltrate Imperial territory, extract Whitcomb, and if possible, try and sabotage those giant four legged things; they gave Bravo Company a load of grief. The loss of even one should cripple them a bit." Patel paused, as if not liking whatever he had to say next. "What I'm about to tell you right now is classified, top-secret. An ONI operative has been captured by the Imperials. As soon as you locate the Admiral, call in a Pelican to send the Admiral on his way. Then take your Spartans and rescue the operative. His name is Joseph Walker. If he is there, get him out of there. If you find him and can't get him out, kill him. He knows too much."

John gave an involuntary shudder. The last person he was ordered to kill was the traitor, Colonel Ackerson. But he wasn't the one who did it.

****Flashback ****

"_I knew you freaks were traitors," growled Ackerson, glaring at the magnum. "But it doesn't matter. My Spartan III's are gonnaâ€¦| "_

"_Your Spartan III's are the ones who led us here," said the Chief, "and now you are gonna pay for the lives lost due to your treachery."_

Ackerson smiled. "Am I? You've got nothing. As soon as you pull that trigger, ONI will collapse. You'll be executed as a traitor. How nice."

_The magnum shook slightly. The Chief had never killed in cold blood. Then someone else came in. Ackerson paled. It was Lieutenant Mendez.

_

"_Colonel James T. Ackerson, you have been charged with high treason. For this, the sentence is death."_

Mendez didn't hesitate.

****End Flashback****

"Yes Sir, I am one-hundred percent on it."

"Well said. Good luck Master Chief. Don't fail."

"I won't."

****_1000 hrs_****

**Fifty miles from Objective "Wolverine"**

"_This as far as I can go," _said the Pelican pilot. _"I'll deploy a 'Hog for you, but there's no knowing when you have to abandon it."

_

"Acknowledged, Bravo-094. We'll call you in when we need evac. Spartan 117 out," replied John. He nodded to the two soldiers who were with him, and they wordlessly got in the Warthog. They weren't Marines or Spartans, but they were the next best thing: they were Naval Special Warfare or NSW troopers. John didn't know why his team was not here, but he assumed Major Patel was keeping them there for morale purposes.

"Let's go Chief," said one of them. "We don't have all night."

John nodded. "Remember, don't fire unless it's absolutely necessary. The numbers of Imperial troops have increased tenfold. We don't want the entire camp on us."

Both of them nodded. Good. It was time to move on.

**1023 hrs **

**ONI "CASTLE VII" Base**

"_Greetings Admiral, I am the Arbiter. We have defeated the Imperials. Do you require assistance?"_

"You're damn right I need assistance," replied Watts. We have about ten thousand troops advancing on our position. We've just received air support from whatever remains of our taskforce, but I'm afraid that won't be enough."

"_We shall obliterate them from orbit."_

"Absolutely not. There are four Spartans and an Admiral behind enemy lines. You'll end up glassing them, too."

"_There are four demons on the planet?"_

"Actually, there are eight. The other four are here to help with the defense. And I'd appreciate it if you refer to the as 'Spartans'."

"_My apologies, it was simply a bad habit. I didn't bring too many soldiers, since this was on short notice. But I have enough to put you on an equal footing with the Imperials." _

Watts smiled broadly. "That's more than I could hope for. Thank you."

The Arbiter smiled too. _"I am simply repaying a debt. Arbiter out."_

Watts turned to Squadron Leader Jacob Dreyfus. "Provide them with air cover. Make sure no enemy craft get near those Phantoms. Use Skyhawks, they're better for this environment."

Dreyfus saluted. "Yes sir."

Watts smiled to himself. It was the turn of the tide.

7. Chapter 7: The Rescue

A/N: I didn't want to portray Vader as a coward, but he knew that the Imps were a lost case. SPOILER! Expect the New Republic to enter the scene soon. Oh, yeah, SpartanCommander, I'll think about the Happs, but I'm not sure. Expect a rainy planet though. About stormie armor, I wanted to put the Imperials and the UNSC on a (sort of) even footing.

Chapter 7

2300 hrs

200 feet from Objective "Wolverine"

The Master Chief cursed his bad luck for what seemed like the hundredth time. He had been forced to abandon the 'Hog almost as soon as they had started. An Imperial patrol had strayed across the jeep's path. John crushed half of them. But the ruckus attracted the attention of a rocket-toting stormtrooper. Prometheus, the AI who had become his replacement for Cortana, reported that these were called shock troopers, for all the good that did him. The rocket, which reminded John of a Hunter's Fuel rod gun shot, detonated underneath the jeep, blowing it to pieces and lifting John and the soldiers with him high into the air. John had survived, his Mark VII armor's shields taking the brunt of the attack. The other two were killed instantly.

What a waste.

But that wasn't why John was angry. The Imperials had found his Spartans first and were closing in on there position.

"I count fifty stormtroopers, one officer, and one special soldier, what the Imperials are calling a 'Darktrooper'."

"How nice," muttered John. "Can you do something else besides stating the obvious, Prometheus?"

"Warning! I'm detecting an Imperial Dropship on approach. They'll be here within fifteen minutes."

John decided to act. "I'm going in."

Prometheus was startled. "That's suicide! The odds of survival are minimal at best."

"If you ever get a chance to take a look at my records, you'll find the odds mean nothing."

John shouldered the S2 sniper rifle. He set his sights on the Imp officer. He pulled the trigger. The APFSDS round tore right through the officer's combat vest and went right through him, killing a stormtrooper who stood beside him. John squeezed of three more shots, and the shock troopers in the party were neutralized. The rifle's

loud report caught the attention of the rest of the stormtroopers, and fired their blasters at the general area where the reports had come from. John however, had moved to their left flank, and began picking off stormtroopers again. He repeated this pattern until there were only twenty of them left. John grinned. Now was fun time. He discarded the sniper and grabbed a blaster rifle, noted that they reloaded just like a normal weapon, and jumped into the midst of the rest of the stormtroopers. The blaster rifle was like a Covenant Carbine, and just as effective in close combat. Finally there were no more. Or so he thought. The only warning he received was a thump behind him. John ducked and rolled to the side, dodging an EMP blast. He had forgotten the Darktrooper. John pulled out two SMGs and began firing. The Darktrooper dodged behind a rock. John crept forward cautiously.

Suddenly, the Darktrooper appeared as if out of nowhere and kicked the weapons out of John's hands. He then received the full blast of an arc caster. His shields drained completely. But the Master Chief didn't let him follow up. He grabbed the Darktrooper and punched him in the chest with all his might. The black armor cracked and the trooper exhaled explosively, his ribcage caved in under the Spartan's relentless attack. He collapsed. With out any remorse, John picked up the trooper and broke his neck. He heard rustling in the bushes behind him and quickly snatched up a blaster.

"Easy, Chief, it's us."

John relaxed. It was his Spartans and three other men. One of them wore the uniform of a Naval officer, and another wore the black enameled bars of a Lieutenant.

"Lieutenant Walker?" John asked.

Walker nodded. "We have the Admiral here, too. Your Spartans rescued me. Now, how about that evac bird?"

Admiral Whitcomb shook his head. "Evac can't reach us here. And we have to get away from this place. They might send in backup."

John looked around. There had to be something they could use. Then he spotted it. "Sir what about that Imperial shuttle?"

Whitcomb squinted at the strange looking ship. "Schroeder, see if you can fly that thing."

"Yes sir." The man ran up the ramp of the shuttle. A few seconds later, he said "I might know sir, but there isn't much time to lose. I might end up flying straight into a tree."

"Pardon me sir," said Prometheus, "I can interface with the ship's controls and get us out of here."

"Then why in hell didn't you say so before? Alright let's go!"

Within five minutes, they were away. According to the AI, the ship's controls were similar, though by no means identical, to that of the Covenant. Suddenly, an alarm warbled.

"What is it?" John asked.

"Bad news, Chief. There are five TIEs coming in fast."

"How close are we to UNSC lines?"

"Not close enough. They'll destroy us before we can reach them."

"Contact HighCom. Tell them to send in air support."

"Yes, Chief. _All UNSC personnel, this is AI Prometheus. We have commandeered an enemy dropship and are engaged by enemy fighters. We need assistance."_

"_Understood," _replied a deep voice, _"we're on our way."_

"Tell me," said Walker, "does anyone think that sounds like an Elite?"

His question was answered when ten Banshees screamed towards the ship and slotted into covering positions.

"_This is Gan 'Ortolee. We will not allow the vermin to touch you. Shall we engage them?"_

Whitcomb grinned. "We'd appreciate it if you did. They're getting too close."

"_I shall leave five Banshees to cover you. 'Ortolee out."_

Five Banshees peeled off from their covering positions and went for the five TIE fighters that began shooting green bolts at them.

'Ortolee grinned. _Their oversized wings make them easy targets from the side, _he thought to himself, _and they are not as agile as ours. _"Take them from the side," he instructed his wing mates.

The TIEs were more agile than 'Ortolee had thought. One Banshee exploded, purple metal flying every where. Another lost its starboard canard, and crashed into the ground. 'Ortolee took out two TIEs himself, while his two remaining wing mates took out another. The other two sheered off.

"_Shall we pursue the cowards?" _asked one of the pilots.

"No. we need not pursue them. They may trap us. We will return to the Human Base,"

"_Yes, Leader."_

**Kamino**

One day later

"_Running from the battle, my young apprentice?"_

Darth Vader knelt before the hologram of Emperor Palpatine. "The taskforce was doomed, Master. The Covenant are stronger than we anticipated. Much stronger. They came in five hundred and twenty

ships. We were reduced to nine star destroyers by the time they arrived."

"_Thirty ships reduced to nine? The UNSC is better than we expected."_

"The man who led them is a very capable leader and a brilliant strategist. Also, their ships would self destruct rather than be boarded. The only ship that was boarded had purged its database, and then self destructed."

"_I see. I permit you to take command of the Empire's First Fleet. The Second fleet will stay here in case the Rebel scum attempt an attack."_

Vader was astounded. The First Fleet consisted of seven hundred ships. It was easily the most powerful fleet in the galaxy. "Thank you, Master. I shall conquer them in time for the construction of the Death Star's frame work."

"_The Superlaser shall go with you. It is fully operational. It will be quite useful against the Covenant."_

"What of the UNSC?"

"_Earth will be needed for the construction of the Death Star. As for the Covenant, wipe them out. All of them."_

A/N: short chapter, I know, but I'm not planning to stretch the Battle for Chiron due to time constraints, i.e, loads of homework, so don't be too angry. I promise the next chapter will be better.

8. Chapter 8: Say What!

A/N: Like I said, I'm not going to continue the Battle of Chiron right now, unless enough people ask me to. If they do, I'll slip it in if I can. Hope you like this chappie.

Chapter 8

**Halo: The Shroud of the Dark Side**

It has been nearly a year since the fall of Chiron TL34, the Planet that bore the brunt of the Empire's wrath. It is the planet that saw and still bears signs of the start of what the UNSC calls the Imperial War, and what the New Covenant calls the War of the Trespassers. The War is going badly for the people of Earth. The Imperials have captured another planet, Agra-II, a vital planet that is the crossroads for Covenant-UNSC interaction. Now cut off from their strongest and only ally, Earth's beleaguered forces continue to wage a furious struggle against Vader's Fleet.

**In the meantime, a certain smuggler and general for a certain republic goes to find out what exactly the Imperials are doing in this obscure part of the galaxyâ€|**

_The "Millennium Falcon"__

**Enroute to Chiron TL34**

"Chewie, take us out of hyperspace," said Han Solo.

Alright. But I still think that were chasing a wild bantha. growled the imposing Wookiee.

"Look," replied Han, "the First Fleet hasn't been seen for nearly a year, and neither has Vader. The Bothans say they were massing at Kamino, and that Kaminoan we met said they were looking for a place called Chiron TL34."

Personally, both the First and the Second Fleets look exactly the same to me, and I think Vader's absence is preferable to his presence. And that Kaminoan could have lied.

"We'll find out soon enough. Look there it is," said Han, pointing triumphantly.

You're starting to act like Skywalker.

"Stuff it, you furball. Which reminds meâ€¦|Leia? Kid! We've found where the Imps are!"

The two siblings came out of their respective quarters. "Well," said a sleepy Luke, "let's get a closer look. I'm glad that something came up."

"Yeah," said Leia, "Luke's lightsaber lessons are the only thing that keeps me awake."

Han ignored her veiled insult. He'd tried to teach her sabacc, to no avail. "Alright, I'll take us in closer."

"Be careful," warned Luke, "there maybe Imperial patrols."

"I don't think so. This place is as silent as a vacuum."

He's right. The Imperials would've left a ship in orbit, and there's nothing on the sensors.

"I'd say that's a good thing. Let's find a place and land."

**1200 hrs**

**Remains of "CASTLE VII" Base**

"How horrible," said Leia. She and the others looked upon the scene of a battle. Dead stormtroopers littered the ground, as well as some others. Lots of others. The smell was horrible, enough for Han to take an oxygen mask for everyone.

"It looks like this took place a year ago," said Han. He bent down to examine the uniform of a dead stormtrooper. "Small blue markings on their gloves. That means they're five-oh-first troopers. Vader was definitely here."

Leia bent to examine another dead soldier. "UNSC," she said, "wonder what that means."

"Whoever these UNSC soldiers are," said Luke, "they gave the Empire a

lot of pain. Look!"

Luke pointed towards an open area where five ATATs were wrecked. Many other ground-based vehicles were there too, presumably UNSC.

"Damn," said Han. "These guys are good. Let's check out their weapons."

I do not think we need to growled Chewbacca. See these small metal cylinders?

"Yeah?"

They use projectile weapons

The Wookiee's point was proved as Han fired. The rifle barked three times in quick succession, and spent casings fell to the ground.

"Wow," said Han surveying the carnage again. "Not bad for a couple of pebble-throwers."

"Let's go inside that place," said Leia, pointing at a bombed out building. "We might find some answers."

Inside the structure, there were more dead. However, not all of the dead were human.

"What theâ€¦|Leia, look at this. These guys are as big as ewoks. And they're armed with some sort of blaster." Han pointed down at a couple of Grunts.

"And look at these guys;" said Luke, "they are like huge. And ugly. They have four mandibles." He looked at an Elite warrior.

If you think that's big, look at this! said Chewbacca, pointing at a Hunter pair. They're surrounded by dead troopers.

"Hey!" called Leia, "there are some guys alive here!"

"WHAT!"

Leia stood in front of two cells. One contained a Marine, and another contained an Elite in gold armor. They were sleeping.

"Hey! Wake up" said Han. The Marine only moaned, but the Elite stood up, though a little unsteadily.

"Who calls?" it whispered.

"Some friends," said Han.

"Imperials?"

"No kriffing way! We're part of the Rebellion against the Empire."

Here however the Elite moaned and fell over.

"We'd better get these two to the _Falcon_," said Han.

**One hour later**

"So your name is Huki 'Fortumee?" asked Leia. The Zealot nodded.

"And you areâ€|"

"Sergeant Avery Johnson, Marine Corps, UNSC."

"You were captured by the Imperials?"

The Sergeant spat on the ground. "They got us alright, those goddamn whity-tighties. They tortured us for hours, but they got nothin' from my mouth, 'xept some nice strong cussing. This fellow," here he gestured to the gold Elite, "didn't say a word. Five days ago, the Imps disappeared, and the bastards left us nothin' to eat. But then you came along."

"Yes," said 'Fortumee, "We are indebted to you."

"No need," said Han, "I've Chewie's life debt already, and I don't want any more. So where to now?"

"I say Earth," said Johnson. "If there is a rebellion against the Empire, we'd like your help. We've lost a lot of good men and too man ships."

Leia smiled sadly. "We'd love to help, but our last battle with the Empire was costly. Twenty Mon Calamari capital ships were lost when we destroyed the Death Star."

Johnson frowned, clearly confused. "I got no idea what you're talkin about."

Leia outlined the origins of the Empire and the Rebellion, now the New Republic, in short, easily digestible terms. 'Fortumee was quite disturbed by the fact of a weapon able to destroy a planet, but he knew of a more powerful force.

"This 'Death Star' you speak of is surely an abomination," said the Elite. "But there is a force more terrible than it, one that could wipe out all life in this galaxy."

>Johnson's face darkened. "Halo," he whispered.<p>

'Fortumee and Johnson outlined everything they knew about the Halos, the Human Covenant War, and the Covenant Civil War. They also disclosed the fact that not all the Halos had been found, and that at least two of the Forerunner installations remained.

Luke frowned. "This isn't good. If the Empire finds them first, we're done for."

Han spoke up. "I still don't understand half of this stuff, but we both need help. We'll go to Earth. Tell me its coordinates, and I'll take you there."

**0200 hrs**

_Imperial Star Destroyer "Korriban"__

**3000 meters above Halo Installation 01**

Darth Vader looked out of the ships view ports, gazing at the amazing thing below him. He had been looking for earth, but instead he had ended up at this ring world. He had seen many planetary paradises, but nothing could rival this. It was the epitome of beautiful.

"Lord Vader, your strike team is ready."

"Good. Tell the rest of the task force to hold position around the ring. Do not land any more troops without my authorization. Am I clear?"

"Yes Lord Vader," replied his assistant. "Relaying your orders now."

**0230 hrs**

The shuttle dropped them off in a swamp. A few meters in front of them was a human dropship, which had apparently crashed. A tech team was looking at it.

"It looks like it crashed here a long while back," said one of the techs. "There's some old blood on the seats, butâ€|no bodies."

"Find out the last transmission from this ship," barked Vader.

"Strange," said the tech. "Apparently, the last transmission was over a year ago. When the humans and the Covenant were at war with each other."

"Play it."

The tech fiddled around with the controls a bit before the radio buzzed.

"â€|_under attack by Coveâ€|isn't Covenantâ€|lieutenant gray has been captured by hostilesâ€|wait, what areâ€|they're everywhereâ€|fire, godammitâ€|AHHHHâ€|_**message terminated.**_"_

Vader was puzzled by the message. There were no intelligence reports of another force in the Human Covenant wars. Whatever it was, it had quickly overwhelmed the survivors of the crash.

"Lord Vader, I've found out who ordered this dropship here. One 'Colonel Ackerson'."

"Leave it. Squad two, three and four, stay here and secure the area. Squad one and five, come with me."

The ten stormtroopers followed the dark shape of Vader. Stormtroopers were bred to be soldiers, and weren't superstitious. Yet some of them started to feel uneasy, walking through the swamp. Vader felt their unease, and was worried. Not much spooked a member of the five-oh-first. Suddenly, a building loomed in the distance. An opening was seen, sloping gently.

"Squad one, stay here and guard this door. Squad five, with

me."

Vader saw an elevator of some sort. It had a holographic interface. This told him that the ring wasn't a UNSC creation, as he knew they hadn't advanced that far. Nor was it Covenant; every thing about them was purple. This was a myriad of blues and yellows. Vader experimentally tested one of the controls. The elevator abruptly started to descend.

When they stopped, they saw a pile of UNSC weapons and stationary guns, but no marines.

"Something's not right," muttered one of the stormtroopers. He gripped his blaster rifle tighter.

They passed through a set of doors and rooms. Every where were human weapons.

And human blood.

Vader stared at the reddish-brown stains. Indeed, something was not right. They passed into what was the biggest room yet.

It looked like a one-floor detention block. Ten doors lined either side. Vader frowned deeply. The Force told him he was surrounded by evil, but he couldn't make out where, or what, the threat was. Suddenly, one of the troopers shouted: "There!"

Vader heard a series of bangs, and one of the cell doors burst open, revealing several jelly fish like creatures. They were the color of dead skin. Vader felt deep revulsion. A scream distracted him.

"Get it off!" yelled a trooper. He had dropped his weapon and grabbed wildly at the back of his head. He turned around, and Vader saw one of the creatures attached to the back of the trooper's neck. Vader cursed.

"Fire! Fire!" he yelled. The other four troopers promptly obeyed. But no sooner had Vader given the order, than the other cells burst open, releasing a wave of the creatures. Strangely, none of the creatures attacked Vader. But they over whelmed the stormtroopers. Vader sensed something behind him, and barely blocked a blaster bolt. He whirled to face the new threat, but what he saw would disturb him for the rest of his life.

It was the trooper who had had a creature on his neck. But he was hideously deformed. His head was pushed to the side, and where his neck should have been, there where strange feelers. Tentacles were sprouting from the trooper's left hand, and it made a horrible gurgling sound. Vader was having his first encounter with the Flood.

**A/N: Dun dun dun! Bet ya didn't see that coming. I know the chapter wasn't good, but lately I haven't had much time on my hands. **

9. Chapter 9: Of Councils and Parasites

**A/N: Thanks for the reviews. I wanted to use a later chapter to introduce the Flood, but I decided now was the time. And to answer

Delta Operator's comment on how Vader escaped the floodâ€¦well, I'll explain it in this chapter. **

Chapter 9

**0247 hrs **

**Inside Flood Containment Facility on Installation 01**

Vader's lightsaber hissed as he cut down another combat form. He couldn't believe what he was seeing. It was like some thing out of a horror story. He hadn't felt so afraid since before he became a Sith Lord. Vader had found out that even if he thought he'd killed a combat form, it would sometimes get up and start fighting again. Vader cut his way through a swarm of combat forms, and saw the elevator he came down on. He jumped on and frantically pressed the controls. To his joy, the elevator rose. As soon as the elevator stopped, he jumped off. Right in front of him were twenty stormtroopers and five Dark Troopers armed with arc casters and blaster cannons.

"Lord Vader," said a trooper, "are you all right?"

"Yes. Where is the rest of my team?"

"We don't know. We lost contact with them nearly fifteen minutes ago. The captain had ordered them to give regular reports every five minutes, and so he sent us down to see what had happened. Lord Vader, they wereâ€¦"

"Mutated. I saw it myself. There is some sort of parasite here. We must get off this ring."

"There is a clearing about a hundred meters from here. We'll call in a shuttle."

"What about the shuttle I used?"

The trooper shook his head. "There's no sign of it."

Suddenly, the elevator behind Vader descended. He cursed. The parasite had managed to find out the controls. "Move! Now!"

The group ran. The Dark troopers occasionally used their jetpacks to check on the area ahead or to fire on the parasite and the combat forms from a safe position. Or so they thought. A combat form jumped into the air and struck a Dark Trooper down. The trooper cried out; his hand was broken. He fell to the ground, where he was buried in a sea of parasites.

"Don't stop!" roared Vader. "Keep moving!"

Finally, they reached the clearing.

"Shuttle 003, we need to get out of here!" yelled a trooper into his COM link.

"_Acknowledged. 003 inbound." _

"Make it quick!" yelled Vader. The combat forms were advancing, and

the reanimated dark trooper was among them, flying like a seven day drunk. Every trooper that had fallen in the retreat had been turned into a combat form. Vader did a quick head count. There were seven troopers and four dark troopers left. At least twenty combat forms advanced on them, along with a sea of parasites.

"Thermal detonators!" yelled a trooper. The thermal detonator was the imperial equivalent of a grenade. It had a two second timer and a blast radius of about three meters. The troopers complied and threw them into the oncoming wave. The results were gratifying. About half of the combat forms were gone, along with countless parasites. But the flying form was still up there, giving the troopers a hard time. Vader took it down by using the force to slam it into a tree. There was a sound like that of a ripe fruit hitting the floor.

There were only the dark troopers left now. Vader knew they would die. He also knew that there were limits to his own strength and power, and that he would eventually die. I have no qualms about it, he told himself. I will only lose a corrupt Empire and an evil and deceptive master. But just as he was about to deactivate his lightsaber, another voice rose in his head, the voice of what he once was. And the voice told him two words: your son.

"My son," Vader repeated to himself. He realized now that there was something to fight for, something to live for. The red blade of his lightsaber came up and cut through a combat form. Then just as he whirled around to find a combat form behind him, it was cut down by a precision laser. He looked up.

About twenty or so flying robots were floating here and there, making quick work of the parasites and the combat forms. Vader was impressed. The droids had done what his strike team and the rescue team could not. Presently, he heard a strange sound, as if someone was humming through a vocabulator. Then he spotted the source: a small floating orb that glowed a bright green color. It flew towards him and started to speak.

"Greetings, Reclaimer. I am 007 Repentant Orbit."

"I am Darth Vader."

"What a strange name Reclaimer. But there is no time to talk. Someone has released the Flood. Containment protocols must be followed. Come with me."

Vader was confused and had no idea what the small droid was talking about. But whatever questions he had were cut off as he felt a strange dizziness. He whited out.

**1028 hrs**

**Super MAC Platform "Berlin Station"**

**Earth**

**Three days before**

"On behalf of the United Earth Government, and the United Nations Space Command, I, Fleet Admiral Terrence Hood, welcome you to Earth."

Lord Hood wasn't so sure that what he saw actually constituted of a president and two generals. He had no idea what to make of the furryâ€|thingâ€|that stood behind them and let out a random roar. But he knew that appearances could be deceiving. He would never forget the damage the covenant did the last time they attacked Earth.

"Thank you," said the woman who had identified herself as Leia. "We would be glad to lend you any assistance we could possibly give, but our resources are limited. We don't have many ships."

"Well, how many do you have?"

This time the one called General Solo spoke up. "We have one hundred ships of varying sizes, give or take. Not half of what the Imperials could throw at us."

Hood grimaced. "I know what you mean." He gestured to a door. "It would probably be better if we spoke in private. The press is on their way up." Once they were seated, Hood said, "The situation isn't good. The Covenant left a small fleet here, to assist us. That was about a year ago. Since then, we haven't had a word from them. Imperial forces captured this planet, Agra-II, the main hub of communications between us and the Covenant. We've no idea as to how the Covenant are doing, but we're more worried about our end right now. Yesterday, we stopped the Imperial advance near what remains of Reach. They are coming too close to Earth, and quite frankly, I don't see how we can stop them from taking a foothold on Earth."

The strangers were silent. Evidently, they were letting it all sink in.

"But," said Han Solo, "You're capable of taking Agra-II. The Imps have you on one side, and the Covenant on the other. You can flank them and retake the planet."

Hood gave a sad smile. "Two years ago, that would've been possible. But since the Old Covenant siege of Earth, we haven't had much of a chance to completely rebuild our fleet. In total, we have scarcely two hundred ships, spread all over the place. We've reinstated some older models, like the Halcyon-class cruisers, that were destined for scrap. Our two super carriers, the Abukir and the Coral Sea, are currently stationed here. Our other two, the Trafalgar and the Atlanta were destroyed, the latter in the current conflict and the former over a year ago at Reach. We have eight super destroyers, the Agamemnon, Saladin, King Richard, Akbar, Jacob Keyes, Reach, Gaia, and Helios. They are currently the only ships fitted with plasma based weaponry, not including the Gettysburg and the new Pillar of Autumn. Twenty other ships are going under plasma upgrades, but they won't be ready for another two months. The other one-hundred and sixty-eight ships still use projectile weapons."

Luke shook his head. "It doesn't look good. Even if we join, we couldn't do much."

"Not necessarily," said Hood. "We're planning a large-scale assault within two weeks. Wonder why so many ships are floating round the planet? We've been planning this for months. We anticipated many losses, but we felt it would be worth it, considering that we'll be

in touch with the main New Covenant force. Now that you're here, however, losses won't be high."

"How many ships were you expecting to lose?" asked Han.

"Estimates were around the nineties."

Luke winced. "We've never lost so many ships in one battle."

Han snorted. "What you're talking about is suicide. Even ifâ€| he was suddenly cut off by the entrance of a man dressed in a black uniform.

"Admiral Hood, Sir!" barked the man.

Hood returned the salute. "At ease. Lieutenant, this is Leia Organa of the New Republic, and Generals Han Solo and Luke Skywalker."

The Lieutenant gave a nod.

"This is Lieutenant Vijay Singh. He works with our intelligence department, ONI."

Singh leaned in closer to the Admiral. "Sir, we were digging into the Ackerson files."

"And?"

"You should take a look at this yourself, Sir."

Hood read through and cursed. "Well, I'll be damned. Another one!" He spun on Singh. "Did you find anything else?"

"Not yet sir. But there's a lot to cover, so I'm positive we'll find more."

"No, Singh. You're going on a mission to see what the hell Ackerson was up to on that damned thing. Contact Captain Keyes and tell her to prepare the _Iroquois. _Have Spartans 117 and 043 report to her ship immediately. Also, contact HighCom and tell them to load up the _Iroquois _with a NOVA."

"A NOVA, Sir?"

"Damn right. We're blowing it to hell before the Imperials find it." Hood waved his hand and Singh ran out of the room.

Luke stood up. "I'll go with them. There's something that's been bothering me, and I feel that I'll find it on that ring."

Hood started. "I didn't say anything about a ring."

Luke smiled. "I can read people's minds-to a certain extent-due to my abilities as a Jedi."

Hood frowned at the word 'Jedi' and consulted a data pad. "So, you're some sort of warrior-monk with special powers."

Luke shrugged. "You could put it that way."

"Hm. Sounds like a Chinese action movie. Very well, permission granted." Hood summoned an officer, who escorted the Jedi out of the room. Hood turned to Han and Leia. "In the meantime, contact your forces and tell them to rendezvous at these coordinates. We'll be waiting."

Han cleared his throat. "One thing you should remember, the Imperials have powerful anti-ship ion cannons that can disable a ship in one shot."

Hood nodded. "I'll remember that. Good luck. I'll see you soon."

**The next day, 0949 hrs**

**UNSC Destroyer "Iroquois"**

**Halo Installation 01**

Captain Miranda Keyes stood on the bridge, staring out at the second Halo she had seen. She had decided to take this ship, after finding out that her father used it to fight the Covenant at Sigma Octanus. The ship still bore scars of the famous 'Keyes Loop', along with remnants of the red war stripes. According to the Arbiter, the Covenant were impressed by the decorations.

A voice startled her out of her reverie. "So, that is Halo?"

She turned to find General Skywalker standing behind her. "Yes. That is Halo."

Skywalker's frown deepened. "Vader's on that thing."

"How do you know?"

"I can feel his presence."

Miranda raised an eyebrow. "What else do you feel?" She meant to sound sarcastic, but she was intrigued nonetheless.

"There are two Imperial ships. One is on the far side of the planet, and the other is holding position above a part of the ring which is out of our view. It seems that something horrible is attacking the second ship. I don't know what it is, but it feels very evil."

Keyes scowled and cursed. "I know exactly what it is. It's the Flood, a parasite that feeds off anything with enough biomass to sustain it." She handed him a data pad with text and pictures of the Flood's various gruesome forms. She knew that he understood when he grimaced. "One thing. Don't let the infection form attach itself to your neck. If it does, you're dead." She turned to the holotank. "Cortana, bring the ship up to combat alert Alpha. We're engaging the Flood. Have the ODST's land twenty miles south of the infected Imperial Ship. After that, I want you to arm a Shiva and destroy that ship before it takes off."

**In the Library**

Vader cut down another combat form and used the Force to throw a Carrier at an oncoming group. The results were satisfying. The

annoying droid, 007 Repentant Orbit, was hovering above him, giggling like an idiot. Vader felt that this was the first droid to have ever gone mad. The combat ceased, and Vader finally had a breather. He had been fighting nonstop for so long; he'd lost count of the hours. He decided to ask the Monitor some questions.

"Monitor, I have some questions."

"Really? I will be happy to oblige."

"What is the condition of my ship?"

"The Flood has attacked your ship and are taking control of it. Many Flood are on their way here to stop you, while the others are merging to form a Command form."

"A Command form?" asked Vader.

"Yes. The Flood's parasitic nature belies their intelligence. As you can see, they are quite capable of utilizing foreign weapons. On another installation, 05, an old command form, called the Gravenmind, captured my brother monitor 2401 Penitent Tangent. I assume he was destroyed when a set of Reclaimers detonated a crude device that resulted in the destruction of the ring."

"How come the infection form ignored me?"

"Due to the fact that most of your body is artificial, you do not have sufficient biomass to sustain the Flood. You may consider yourself lucky, Reclaimer."

Lucky my foot, thought Vader, as the loud shrieks of the Flood split the air. Repentant Orbit buzzed toward him, saying, "Come Reclaimer! We must retrieve the Index." ****

10. Chapter 10: The Great Battle of our Time

A/N: I'd like to thank SpartanCommander, who helped me a lot with this chapter by way of names for those iron ladies of the UNSC. Also, those who play Medal of Honor may recognize some parts here.

Chapter 10

**1145 hrs**

**UNSC Super Destroyer "Agamemnon", Part of Strike Group Alpha**

Enroute to Agra-II

Admiral Stanley Whitcomb stood on the bridge of his brand new ship. He was proud of her, but he knew she wouldn't replace the _Titan. _The AI, Locutus, was too mechanical for his taste. The only person from his old bridge crew was Jens Schroeder, the helmsman. Not that the others were bad; far from it. Whitcomb took a look at the names of the ships in his group.

Ship Manifesto Alpha Group

****Mayflower-Titanic Class (Lightly armed Transport)****

****Plymouth-Titanic Class (Lightly armed Transport)****

****Avenger-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Ticonderoga-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Mobile Bay-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Rhode Island-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Verdun-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Somme-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Normandy-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Helix-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Monitor-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Merrimack-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Czar-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Yamato-Ticonderoga Class (Heavy attack Cruiser)****

****Agamemnon-Mombassa Class (Heavy attack Destroyer)****

****Jacob Keyes-Mombassa Class (Heavy attack Destroyer)****

****Gaia-Mombassa Class (Heavy attack Destroyer)****

****Churchill-Zanzibar Class (Heavy attack Destroyer)****

****Pillar of Autumn-Zanzibar Class (Heavy attack Destroyer)****

****Gettysburg-Zanzibar Class (Heavy attack Destroyer)****

****Ascendant Justice-Zanzibar Class (Heavy attack Destroyer)****

****Dreadnought-Zanzibar Class (Heavy attack Destroyer)****

****Arcadia-Zanzibar Class (Heavy attack
Destroyer)****

****Andromeda-Zanzibar Class (Heavy attack
Destroyer)****

****Okinawa-Zanzibar Class (Heavy attack
Destroyer)****

****Montgomery-Zanzibar Class (Heavy attack
Destroyer)****

****Abukir-Trafalgar Class (Large assault
Carrier)****

****Enterprise-Iroquois Class (Light defense
Cruiser)****

****Dauntless-Iroquois Class (Light defense
Cruiser)****

****Asgard-Iroquois Class (Light defense Cruiser)****

****Asmodeus- Iroquois Class (Light defense Cruiser)

****Defiant-Iroquois Class (Light defense Cruiser)****

****Northern Shore-Halcyon Class (Light attack
Destroyer)****

****Liberty's Call-Halcyon Class (Light attack Destroyer)****

****Flow of the Ganga-Halcyon Class (Light attack
Destroyer)****

****Challenger-Samson Class (Heavy Transport) ****

****Razorback-Samson Class (Heavy Transport) ****

****Oceania-Samson Class (Heavy Transport)****

****Atlas-Atlas Class (Armed Transport)****

****St. Louis-Atlas Class (Armed Transport)****

****End Manifesto****

Twelve Ticonderoga Class ships would definitely help him out. Ticonderoga Class ships were the backbone of the UNSC fleet, and had a good success rate. He was astounded to have nine Zanzibar Class ships. They were armed to the teeth with plasma and ballistic weaponry, and they were the newest ships in the Fleet. Admiral Hood had grabbed for them like a child would for candy. He was even more surprised that there were two other Mombassa Class ships besides his. They were the most powerful ships in the UNSC fleet, having at least twice as many weapons as Zanzibar Class ships. The presence of a Carrier made him decide to relegate the Halcyon Class ships to guard it. The Iroquois Class ships would protect the transports, which

would land thousands of Marines and ODST's. The Ticonderoga Class ships had eight Longsword fighters each, and the Abukir held one hundred of the fighters. Add that to the two fighters the Halcyon Class ships carried, a total of two hundred and two Longsword fighters were present in the fleet. Whitcomb's group consisted of mostly offensive ships for a reason. Alpha Group would be the 'spearhead' of the UNSC offensive. The rest of the hundred-strong fleet, the 'hammer', would sweep in seconds later, confusing the Imperial Fleet. They knew they would be hard put to it. A Prowler had reconned the planet hours before, and reported that four hundred Imperial ships were present. If the UNSC fleet didn't put up its shields fast enough, there wouldn't be much of a fleet left.

"Admiral Whitcomb," stated Locutus, disturbing Whitcomb, "We will exit slip space in five minutes. Transmit Fleet Arrangement Data?"

"Do so, Locutus."

The fleet arranged itself, stronger and newer ships in front, older ships and transports behind.

"Locutus, open a secure channel to Lieutenant Walters."

"Done."

The image of an ONI Lieutenant appeared on the holotank. "Yes, Sir?"

"Once we exit slip space, it won't be long before the shit hits the fan. Before that, I want you to take the Prowler and jump into Covenant space. Tell them what's going on and request help."

"Do you think they'll agree, Sir?"

"Knowing the Sangheli, they'll scramble at the chance to fight. Well, you're dismissed. Good luck Lieutenant. The fate of earth is in your hands."

"Aye, Sir." The holotank switched off.

Locutus' voice suddenly piped up. "All hands, report to your action stations. This is not a drill, repeat, this is not a drill. External and internal contact imminent."

Locutus turned to Whitcomb while another part of him continued to announce. "Sir, we will exit in five, four, three, two, one, mark!"

As soon as he said 'mark', the inky black nothingness of slip space peeled away, revealing stars and a beautiful, lush planet.

And four hundred Imperial ships.

"All frontline ships raise shields!" shouted Whitcomb over FLEETCOM 7. The command was obeyed, and none too soon. The automated ion cannons fired a salvo at Alpha group, which dissipated against the shields.

"All ships target those three ion cannons and destroy them now!"

Three hundred Archer missiles sped toward the said cannons and literally blew them to bits. The Imperial fleet, now alerted to the hostile presence, began to form up.

"All ships, fire at that Super Star Destroyer."

The ship in question raised its shields just in time; however, the attack beat the shields out.

"Pulse lasers, now!"

Twelve blue-white lines of plasma cut the hapless flagship into so many chunks of scrap metal. Whitcomb smiled. Without their flagship, the Imperials were like sheep without a shepherd. They would scatter, making it easier for the fleet to take them out. But there were three hundred and ninety nine left.

"B group, escort the transports to orbit. A group, stay in formation, ready MAC cannons." Now that he had split his fleet, he had only twenty four ships with him, and it was imperative that they stick together. A quick look at the radar raised that number to eighty four; Fleet Admiral Hood had arrived.

"_Good to see you stole the first kill, Whitcomb. We'll help you to engage the rest."_

"Yes Sir," laughed Whitcomb, "thank you Sir." He turned to the com. "All ships, command has been given to Fleet Admiral Hood."

"_All ships, arm MAC cannons and fire on my mark. Mark!" _Hood's orders were carried out to the letter and fifteen Imperial ships were destroyed. The rest returned fire. Most of the turbo laser bolts dissipated on the shields, but some found a mark.

"Sir," said Locutus, "we lost the _Asmodeus._ The _Arcadia _has sustained minor damage, and the _Defiant _has been disabled."

Whitcomb inwardly sighed. It was a sad thing to know that one ship was destroyed, and another disabled. But it was better than he had feared.

"_All ships, heat up your MAC cannons, and have a solution which has them impacting with the Archers. Fire on my mark."_

As the ships' AI's frantically worked up a solution, the Imperials warmed up their batteries and fired. The shots were slow; they were high powered.

"_Mark!" _The powered up MAC rounds fired. Seconds later, the Archers were launched. But the Imperial barrage was coming.

"_All ships disperse! Engage at will! Repeat, engage at will!"_

The fleet scattered, saving most from the green bolts. But not all.

"Sir, the _Enterprise _and _Flow of the Ganga _have been destroyed. The _Churchill _is disabled. She can fight, but she has no engines."

"_Agamemnon, this is Pillar of Autumn. Troops have been successfully landed."_

"Good work, _Autumn. _Tiger Squadron, take your flyboys and assist the ground-pounders. Lord knows they need the help."

"_Affirmative. Tiger leader out."_

**2156 hrs**

**Squadron Gamma**

**Enroute to shoreline of Continent AG-3**

**Agra-II**

The Pelican's troop bay was filled with eleven Marines and a Spartan. Drake-010 stood silently, unaffected by the frequent jolts. Although a Chief Petty Officer, the man next to him, Infantry Captain Richards, outranked him, so he knew he should listen to what the man said.

Richards shouted over the din of the Pelican's engines. "Move fast, spread out, and stay clear of open beach. Portside, you're with the Chief. Starboard, you're with me. Head for cover and get to the shingle. I'll see you on the beach."

Drake surveyed the men with a critical eye. These were recruits, boys who hadn't seen combat before. They were obviously frightened. One of them was praying softly, another was rocking back and forth in his seat. They frequently looked out the Pelican's view ports. Drake looked out also. Suddenly, a green bolt connected with the Pelican he had been looking at, and it burst into flames. He could still hear the men inside screaming. He looked back at the Marines. They had seen the entire thing, and it had not improved their morale. He realized that the only thing keeping them up was the fact that a Spartan was with them. Suddenly, the Pelican slowed down. One of the recruits jumped up and manned the machine gun.

"Prepare for landing!" roared Richards.

The Pelican swerved, and the launch bay door opened.

A hail of blaster bolts flew in the ship. Luckily, no one was hurt. The Marines landed in waist-deep water. The beach was littered with obstacles, the largest one being the hulk of an ATAT. Already, about ten marines were hiding there. Drake led the Marines toward it, occasionally dropping down to avoid the fire of the heavy repeating blasters. Finally they reached the ATAT, where they were shortly joined with Captain Richards.

"Alright, Spartan, blow a hole in this hulk and we'll make a run for the base of the bunker."

Drake complied. For some reason or another, he loved to blow up things. "Fire in the hole!" he shouted. Seconds later, there appeared

a gaping hole, through which the base of the bunker could be seen.

"Go go go!" shouted Richards. They made a mad dash for the bunker, but only Drake, Richards, and four others made it. Richards quickly assessed the situation.

"Two HRB's, plus enfilade from that bunker. We gotta find a way up the bluff. Jefferson, Webber, you're up. Head for that trench over there. Wait for my signal." He checked his submachine gun. "Covering fire!"

The three Marines opened up on the gunners behind the Heavy Repeating Blasters. Both of them fell, and the two privates ran for the trenches while Drake and Richards provided covering fire. Suddenly, Richards cried out; a blaster bolt caught him in the leg. He crumpled to the ground, forcing Drake to pull him to safety. The two Marines were gunned down by the new gunners.

Richards gritted his teeth in pain. "Alright, Spartan. It's your turn now. Stick to those impact craters. Take out the bunker gunners if you can get a clear shot."

"Yes, Sir." Drake waited for the firing of the HRB's to stop, and made a mad run for the trench. He knew from past experience that the HRB's blaster bolts were strong enough to take down even his shields. He jumped into a crater, where he was subsequently pinned down. They were using controlled bursts to keep him where he was. He knew that if they followed Imperial methods, a sniper would be coming along shortly. He had to get out before that happened. Then he remembered the most important upgrade his armor had received: active camouflage. He chinned the control, and his hand instantly became transparent. The Imperial gunners stopped, clearly confused as to where their prey had gone. Drake ran for the trench, and the gunners didn't notice that the ground was slightly distorted. Drake smiled.

Time to clear a bunker.

**1300 hrs**

Surface of Halo Installation 01

The Master Chief looked around him. Will-043 was with him, as well as twenty marines armed with shotguns and plasma rifles. One even had a flamethrower. The Jedi, Skywalker, stood next to him, holding what appeared to be a hollow metal cylinder. They were inside Halo's control center. According to Skywalker, Vader would be coming along presently. John didn't want to be caught unprepared for the Flood, and had brought an energy sword. He had discovered that the Covenant weapon was good at dismantling the Flood.

Installation 01 had a control center that had a huge hologram of Halo, just like Installation 04. The floors were mirror like, polished to perfection. The only thing that made it unique was the statues of Reclaimers, or Forerunner-era humans, which lined the walkways. They almost looked alive. Each statue had a look of sorrow on its face.

The room's single blast door opened, and the Marines scrambled to their positions. John and Luke stood in the middle of the walkway. In

the doorway stood Darth Vader, flanked by five beaten up Sentinels and a glowing green orb. In Vader's hand was the Index.

****A/N:** Long chappie, right? Don't worry; the MC will open up his can of whoop-ass soon. Oh yeah, does anyone think that Will-043 will play a significant role in Halo 3? You know, the numbers of his name add up to seven and he has seven letters in his name.******

11. Chapter 11: Blades Clash

****A/N:** Someone said that the PoA was a light cruiser, but she isn't. For those who haven't read 'Halo: The Fall of Reach', she is a destroyer, but apparently one with a low opinion in the Fleet. "Real destroyers were rare in the fleet. This piece of junk, however, was not one of those." (FoR) (Sorry if I haven't quoted it correctly).

Chapter 11

****1300 hrs****_

****Control Room****_

****Halo Installation 01****_

The Marines wasted no time taking out the damaged Sentinels. Five burning heaps of metal fell to the floor. Vader, however, seemed undaunted. The sound of his mask recycling air filled the room, accompanied by his deep baritone voice.

"I will deal with you later. First, I must activate this ring to destroy the Flood."

"Deal?" asked the Monitor. "Why do you Reclaimers insist on fighting?"

The Master Chief stepped forward. "He hasn't told you how this ring works, has he?"

"What does it matter?" replied Vader. "It will destroy the Flood, and perhaps, if I learn to use it properly, you as well."

"Halo doesn't destroy the Flood, it destroys their _food. _Humans, Covenant, it doesn't make a difference. This ring will destroy all sentient life in the galaxy. You're making a big mistake."

Vader was suspicious. "Monitor, is what he says true?"

"Why, yes. Technically, this installation has a maximum range of twenty-five thousand light-years. But once the other installations come into play, this galaxy will be quite clean of all life able to support the Flood, save one small pocket here, caused by the destruction of Installations 04 and 05. But I thought you knew that. Did you forget?"

Luke had sorrow written all over his face. "You can't do this, father."

John spun to look at Luke. Father?

Vader looked down for a moment. Then his head snapped back up, and he ignited his lightsaber. "No. I am safe, for not much is left of my old body. But you will be consumed. For the glory of the Empire, I am even willing to sacrifice my own son." He charged, crimson blade held high.

John couldn't believe that the thing that walked so awkwardly could move so fast. However, he snapped up his Battle Rifle and emptied the entire clip at the Sith Lord.

Not even one bullet reached him. He simply blocked them, the rounds hissing to vapor.

This isn't working, John thought. Let's see him block this. He ignited the energy sword and charged. Luke yelled "No! Don't!" but he was ignored.

Vader was surprised to see the energy sword, but only mildly. The Spartan was fast, much faster than he was, but he couldn't use the Force. He used the Force to subtly nudge the armored giant to the side, and struck him on the back.

John was sorely confused, a bad thing for a Spartan. He had Vader in his sights, but he was somehow pushed to the side. Then a hammer blow fell on his back, and his shield dropped to near zero. He rolled to the side, just in time to see a blood-red blade embedded in the floor where he had lain only seconds before. Vader was leaving his stomach wide open, and John punished him by kicking him right there. Vader's mask emitted a loud "Oomph!" and he fell on his back, twenty meters away, right in the middle of the Marines. They raised their weapons.

"No!" shouted Luke. "Fall back!" but it was too late. Vader had regained his footing and proceeded to cut down seven Marines in a heartbeat. From Luke's hand sprung a blade of forest-green, and he blocked the Sith Lord's blood-shine blade from killing a Marine. John regained his footing and jumped into the fray.

The father and son were fighting so furiously, it looked like they were in the midst of glowing green fans and sheets of crimson flame. John's blue energy sword joined in, and for the surviving Marines, it looked like a fantastic lightshow.

It was a testament to Vader's skill that, despite being exhausted after hours of fighting the Flood, and the clumsiness due to his suit, he managed to hold his own against the Spartan and the Jedi. Suddenly, Vader used the Force again to push John out of the battle and on his ass. Needless to say, he was very pissed. Cortana, who had kept quiet all this time, said something he really didn't want to hear.

"Chief, I'm picking up movement. Ten Sentinels and an Enforcer are approaching through many hidden passage ways. Also, I'm getting reports from Lt. Singh that the taskforce that was supposed to plant the NOVA in the crashed Imperial ship is all but consumed. Singh and the survivors are returning to the _Iroquois." _

John tuned in on the Marines' freq. "Listen up. Contact is imminent. Heavy weapons, be ready. I'll fight Vader." John checked the power in

the energy sword. There was 50 power left. It had to be enough.

Vader was impressed with his son's skill. The boy had nearly killed him twice, but had hung back from administering the killing blow. Apparently, the boy still thought that a shadow of Anakin Skywalker still resided within his black shell of a body. Suddenly the Spartan leaped out of nowhere, and Vader couldn't react fast enough to block it.

John's aim wasn't as true as he had hoped, but better than he had expected. The blue energy blade sheared away Vader's sword arm, and the Sith Lord fell back with a cry. However, the severed arm opened its palm, releasing the lightsaber. Vader summoned it to his left hand and struck at the Spartan's leg; however, the shields held against the red blade. Out of nowhere, Repentant Orbit floated in front of his face.

"Come, Reclaimer. You have sustained too much damage to continue fighting successfully."

John watched as the Monitor teleported Vader away. The green orb floated to him.

"I'm shocked that you would not follow proper containment procedures. But I am even more shocked that you would prevent one from following the protocol. If I was a low level intelligence, I would have assumed that you are helping the Flood."

John shook his head. "Human kind has been fighting for it's survival for over thirty years. I'm not about to give up now. There is one more option to fight the Flood."

The ten Sentinels and the Enforcer ceased their attack on the Marines.

"My creators exhausted every option when fighting the Flood. The Halos, as you call them, were the last option left. How can you stop the infestation from spreading?"

John measured his words carefully. "You help us retake the crashed ship; we'll plant a nuclear device. The resulting explosion will cause the ring to splinter and fall apart. The environment systems will fail, causing an instant freeze-over. Any Flood left alive will be of no danger to the rest of the galaxy. We'll tag this location and a UNSC taskforce will come and glass whatever remains. We've done it before."

The Monitor tilted its head slightly. The seconds stretched out. "Very well, Reclaimer. I shall assist you." Suddenly, it giggled. "To think that my creators tried everything they could think of, but didn't think of such a crude but effective option! Of course, the infestation was more widespread, but it would've worked. How amusing! Hahahaha!"

Cortana snorted loudly in John's ear. Ignoring her for the time being, he nodded to the Monitor. "Good. Let's move out then. There's not much time left."

**1700 hrs**

**New Covenant Holy City "Honest Colossus"**

First Age of Rebirth

The Arbiter stood in the huge garden of the new city. The Council had named it the _Honest Colossus _because they wanted to put more emphasis on honesty, which would help regain their lost honor.

Judging by how many human lives had been lost, they had a long way to go.

The war with the Trespassers was going better than it had been. They had won their first major victory after the disaster at Chiron TL34. Nearly two hundred Imperial ships had been destroyed, and they had captured a high ranking officer, a Grand Admiral Thrawn. The cowardly creature was obviously not human; the red eyes and gray skin gave testament to that. During his interrogation, he had said he had lost only because 'I have seen little of your artwork'.

The Arbiter strolled to a moving walkway that took him to one of the city's huge view ports. Outside, nearly four hundred ships patrolled the area. In about a month, he would attack the planet Agra-II. Suddenly, his com crackled.

"_Noble Arbiter, a human stealth ship has exited slip space. It has sent a message to be read only by you."_

Only by me? "Is the human ship damaged?"

"_Heavily. We are retrieving it as I speak."_

"Good. Bring him to me immediately."

"You have begun your attack on the planet?" asked the Arbiter.

The exhausted human nodded. "Yes. We mustered around one hundred ships for the battle. Many of them are ships that your Engineers upgraded. Before I left, Admiral Whitcomb destroyed the Imperial flagship. I assume that the Imperial fleet is in disarray, but there are too many ships, even now. Our plan hinged on my ability to contact you. If you attack now, we can retake Agra-II."

The Arbiter didn't have to decide. "We will come. You will stay with us, as our guest."

"With all due respect, sir, I belong on the battle field."

The Arbiter laughed. "Where did you think we were going?"

The huge fleet organized itself around the city, and a huge slip space rupture opened up, revealing what the human saw only as inky black nothingness, but what the covenant saw as the road to battle.

**1900 hrs**

**UNSC Super Destroyer "Agamemnon"**

**Agra-II**

Admiral Stanley Whitcomb stood in the middle of the command deck; his fixed 'captain's chair' had fallen off its pedestal, dumping the unfortunate senior officer on his ass. The Agamemnon had sustained significant damage, but the armor, similar to that of Halcyon-class ships, was doing a splendid job of holding the ship together. He had destroyed another three Imperial ships, and the Imperials had lost a total of seventy three ships. The UNSC, by contrast, had lost only eight, older model ships, and those were able to send most of their crews to safety. The battle, however, was far from over. An Imperial ship rallied the others, and was presenting a problem to Hood's fleet. Then Whitcomb noticed something on the radar.

"Sir, four hundred New Covenant ships have just exited slip space behind the Imperial fleet," stated Locutus. "They have already begun the attack."

The Imperial fleet was once again thrown into disarray. Obviously, they hadn't expected on the Covenant's arrival. Whitcomb's COM crackled to life.

"_This is Fleet Admiral Hood. Alpha Group, report to Checkpoint Delta. We'll flank the enemy."_

As Whitcomb complied, he sent a message to the ships in his group not to pierce the Imperial line. He didn't want to risk hitting a friendly ship. It seemed that the Covenant leader was thinking the same thing; the silver-teardrop shaped ships were holding their position. Hood was moving his ships to a point between the enemy and the planet. The UNSC ships would fire on the enemy flanks, while the Covenant would use heavy fire to decimate the Imperial fleet. The only problem was that the MAC guns could only be used in close combat, something the Imperials excelled at.

An alarm hooted. Locutus informed him that they were in position to attack.

"All Alpha Group ships, lock Archer missiles on those Victory-Class Star Destroyers and fire at will," barked Whitcomb. The ships complied, and with simultaneous fire from the Covenant and Hood's group, around half of the Imperial ships were destroyed. The Covenant, however, were not satisfied with their success, and released another volley. The fire power was tremendous; Locutus blacked out the view screen. When it came back on, only twenty Imperial ships were left. The view screen opened a smaller window, showing the face of a distressed Imperial officer.

"_To all Covenant and UNSC ships, this is acting Admiral Oftee. We surrender completely."_

Another window opened, showing the highly decorated individual called the Arbiter. "_I am the Arbiter of the New Covenant. I accept your surrender. Prepare to be boarded."_

"_Understood."_

Hood's image appeared on screen. "_That tuned out better than I thought. Thanks for the help, Arbiter. If you don't mind, we still have around fifty thousand heavily armed little problems ground-side

and we need help."_

"_I would be honored. Arbiter out."_

"Sir," said Locutus, "twenty ships of unknown configuration have exited slip space a hundred thousand miles off our battle group."

"_This is General Solo of the New Republic. Sorry we missed the party."_

A smile appeared on Hood's face. "_The real party's ground-side. Care to join?"_

"_Why not? The more the merrier."_

12. Chapter 12: Deja vu

Chapter 12

****United Nations Space Command****

****Alpha Priority Transmission 22321Y-66****

****Public Key: **file/charlie-gamma-beta-two/**

****From: **Admiral Roland Freemont, Commanding Officer,**

**FLEETCOM Sector One Commander/ (UNSC Service Number:
00745-16778-HS)**

****To: **ALL UNSC SHIPS in JERICHO, TANTALUS and ZETA DORADUS
systems**

****Subject: **IMMEDIATE RECALL**

****Classification: **Classified (BGX Directive)**

/start file/

Imperial forces detected on SOL system's edge. ALL available UNSC warships to regroup at rally point ****GAIA ****at best speed. ****ALL SHIPS ****are to enact the Cole Protocol immediately.

/end file/

0030 hrs****

Agra-II****

Admiral Hood read the transmission again, to make sure that it wasn't a hoax. He couldn't believe it. The UNSC's biggest and most well-kept secret was shattered, despite all they had done.

The Arbiter was surprised, too, but he had a hunch as to how the Imperials found Earth. "There must be a holy artifact down there on the planet."

Hood nodded. "That must be how the Imperials found that

Halo."

"What!"

"Yes, another one. We learned of its location when we dug into the files of the traitor, Colonel Ackerson. A one ship taskforce led by Captain Miranda Keyes arrived there with a NOVA, only to find two Imperial ships. Apparently, Vader is there, too, but we can't be certain. We haven't received any transmissions since then."

The Republic Admiral Ackbar, a fish-like creature, butted in. "There is still the matter of the Imperial presence on this planet. We simply cannot ignore it."

Hood frowned. "You're damn right we can't. But we can't ignore the Imperial force about to invade Earth."

The Arbiter clicked his mandibles loudly, to get everyone's attention. "I will take three hundred ships with me to Earth. The UNSC will take eighty of their ships, which must include their best. The Republic will take ten ships. That will leave around two hundred and two ships here, while we will arrive at Earth with three hundred and ninety ships. Add that to the fleet at Earth, and we will have over four hundred ships. The Imperials will have around two hundred. They will not reach the surface without being destroyed utterly."

Ackbar stroked what had to be his chin thoughtfully. "The message got here nearly an hour ago. Then we had to decrypt it, which took another hour. The Imperials have doubtless by now gained a firm foothold on Earth. We have no time to lose."

In an hour's time, three hundred and ninety UNSC, New Covenant and New Republic capital ships primed their engines, and made the collective jump the slip space. Earth was in grave danger, and there was no way the Imperials would have her.

**0130 hrs**

**Surface of Agra-II**

"Say WHAT?" yelled Sgt. Johnson.

Captain Richards nodded wearily. "The Imperials managed to find her, but I don't know how. But right now, we have to concentrate on things down here. The _Challenger_ misdropped her compliment of ODSs, the 101st and the 52nd. The objectives they were supposed to capture are still in enemy hands, and it's our job to get them. We'll be supported by the Covenant Third Army of Reparation."

"Damn silly name," muttered Johnson.

"The flyboys will be on station when we need them, so that will come in handy. Also, some covies will be joining us: three Grunts and two Elites, all Special Ops." He had hardly finished speaking when three Grunts and two Elites in jet black armor approached. One of the Elites bowed his head slightly.

"I am Ruka 'Partomee, special operations captain."

"Good to see you. Captain Richards, Fifth Marine Division. If you're ready, we'll go."

"I am prepared."

"Good. See me at oh-two hundred hours."

"Understood."

When they were out of earshot, one of the recruits muttered, "fucking split-lip."

Johnson slammed the boy across the face. "You watch your mouth, boy. They're friends now. So if I hear you say another word 'bout them that ain't nice, you'll wish you never been born."

The stunned kid managed to stutter a 'yes sir' before getting up shakily to his feet and checking his weapons. He went with his friends, who formed a small knot away from the three commanding officers.

"I didn't know that the new guys felt that way, even now," said Drake-010.

Richards shook his head sadly. "Old hurts take a long time to heal. And for us, there's a lot to heal. They did glass over two billion people."

"I say that we forget it Sir."

"Forget it, Spartan?"

"If you look at it from their point of view, they had it worse. Being ordered to kill innocent people by a leader they trusted in the name of religion, then finding out their error when those same leaders betrayed them; they must have been overwhelmed. If you take a look at New Covenant politics, honor and honesty are the order of the day. They'll do anything to regain what they see as their lost honor."

"Hm." Was the sole rejoinder.

Half an hour later, the transport 'Hog thundered down the dirt road. In normal weather, the vehicle would kick up a plume of dust that any air patrol would see. But it was the 'wet season' on Agra-II, and the roads were muddy. The recruits and the Covenant veterans trained their weapons around them. The transport Warthog, unlike its cousins the LAAG and the LAAV, had no mounted weapons, and relied entirely on the passengers for outgoing fire.

Richards stopped the 'Hog near a large farm house. There were craters formed by grenades, and pieces of white armor. A dead stormtrooper lay in the road in front of the house, his helmet holed in numerous places. In the first floor window sat an HRB, or Heavy Repeating Blaster. It had a commanding view of the road, and would have been a real cause for concern, except for the fact that it wasn't manned at the moment.

Drake squinted and enabled his helmet's binoculars. He couldn't see much, but then something moved: a flash of white against the shadows.

The stormtroopers knew they were there, and were waiting for them.

"Sir," said Drake, "There are Imps in the building, and I suspect they've set a trap for us."

Richards nodded. "I thought as much. 'Partomee, you and the Spartan have active camo. If you can sneak in and take them out, we'll be able to search the building."

'Partomee nodded. "Come, Spartan. We will destroy this filth." The two Elites vanished along with the Spartan, who had to turn on his thermal imaging to see the elites. He looked behind him. Six hotspots and three cold spots took up positions behind the 'Hog: six humans and three Grunts. In front of him were the two eight foot tall hotspots that were the Elites. The trio advanced into the house.

Drake prayed that the stormtroopers' helmets had no thermal imaging. The active camo generated heat rather than mask it, so anything heat sensitive would notice them. He pulled his combat knife out of its sheath and approached the nearest trooper. The Elites took out their energy blades.

They struck as one. Three dead troopers hit the floor. The Elites wasted no time cutting down the other troopers, and Drake slit the throat of a Dark Trooper who had come down to join the party.

Drake opened a channel to Richards. "First floor secure, sir."

"_Really? That wasn't even fifty seconds! Are you sure?"_

"Absolutely, sir."

"_Alright. Johnson, move in. Abdul, McMahon, Williams, you're with the Sergeant. The rest of you, you're with me. We'll check the rear; see if any of the bastards decided to hide there. The Grunts will guard the front. Spartan, check upstairs."_

"Yes sir." Drake moved up the stairs slowly, pistol out in front of him. The Elite called 'Partomee had his six, plasma rifle at the ready. The wooden steps creaked slightly.

The trooper saw Drake before he did. Red bolts of energy depleted his shield bar, and Drake dove for cover. But there wasn't enough time. The trooper raised his rifle and was in the process of leveling it at the Spartan's head, when blue plasma washed over his helmet, vaporizing it and the head it contained. As the headless trooper fell to the ground, Drake heard the Elite give a hearty laugh.

"Thanks."

"No need for thanks. I enjoyed that very much."

Drake smiled within his helmet, but then his sensitive hearing picked up noise from one of the rooms. He went up to the closed door, found it blocked, and used a code that was very famous from its use in the

Second World War.

"Thunder!"

"Flash!" was the reply. A sound of furniture being moved was heard. The door opened, revealing five ODSs. They bore the historical symbol of the Screaming Eagles on their shoulder pauldrons. A Corporal went up to the Spartan and saluted. "Corporal Harding, sir. We landed off target, and we've been trying to find our way ever since. The problems are the enemy snipers. Our only sniper was killed in the clearing a little ways west from here, and we got trapped. We were the only ones out of twelve that managed to break out of that bloody mess, and barricaded ourselves here when the white armored bastards followed us here. Then you showed up." He grinned. "We were wondering what the ruckus was."

Drake sized up their weapons. Two BR55 rifles, two submachine guns, and the old yet useful MA5B Assault Rifle, held by the Corporal. A gruff voice spoke up.

"Hell yeah, some honestâ€to-god Marines," said the good Sergeant Johnson.

Suddenly, Drake's COM went off. He heard a squeaky voice; it was one of the Grunt sentries.

"_Enemy comes! You see, you see?" _He heard the whine of plasma fire and the quick _dow! dow! _of blaster bolts. Seconds later, Richards was on the COM.

"_Damn it! The mothers must've had a garrison nearby. Drake, Sarge, hold the front; that's where the whities will go. We'll hold the back."_

Drake leapt down the stairs and looked out the window. Ten stormtroopers were firing on the Grunts. One Grunt was already dead, but the other two were keeping the troopers at bay with their fuel rod guns. 'Partomee, who had followed the Spartan down the stairs, bellowed a war cry and tossed a plasma grenade. The fizzing blue orb adhered to a trooper, who freaked out and ran into a group of his comrades.

****Boom.****

Pieces of charred flesh and white armor rained down as the remaining four troopers bugged out. Drake wasted little time preparing for the inevitable Imperial attack.

"Sarge, Abdul, go upstairs and use your sniper rifles. 'Partomee, it would be a good idea if you place your heavy weapons behind some cover. I'll man the HRB in the window, and you two can cover my flanks."

Technically, 'Partomee outranked the Chief Petty Officer. But the Sangheli knew that the human's plan was a good one, so he went to work. Everything was ready when the thirty Imperial stormtroopers thundered up the driveway.

The tall hedges on either side of the drive way forced the Imperials into a tight formation. Not a good thing when your enemy has two

heavy weapons and a lot of grenades plus an HRB. The snipers added more suffering to the white soldiers. Within two minutes, the fight was over, with only two stormtroopers left.

"Hold fire and capture those two," barked Drake. Unlike the other troopers, who were discovered to be clones, normal human troopers wore a helmet with a "T" shaped visor. They were usually officers. These two fit the bill perfectly. 'Partomee and the other Elite, followed by the two Grunts, went up to the two.

"You will drop your weapons," growled the Elite, "now."

The two looked at each other and put the weapons on the ground. The Grunts collected the blasters, chortling in their own language. When the foremost officer neared Drake, he yanked off the helmet. A fierce female face looked back at him.

"What is your name and rank?" demanded the Spartan. He towered over the woman.

For answer she spat at his visor. His shield flickered slightly. He bent forward and grasped her neck. "That's not what I asked." He applied more pressure to her neck.

"Alright, I'll talk," she gasped. "My name is Illia Daala, First Lieutenant. I volunteered to lead a detachment of troops to capture or kill any UNSC troops. You totally annihilated them."

Richards walked out from behind the house. "You have to kill in war, ma'am, but only when necessary. We were protecting ourselves and our men. You however, didn't have to do what you did on Chiron TL34. Yes, I know who you are. You're the damned Black Widow, the interrogator."

Drake turned to face the Captain. "What?"

"To make Admiral Watts talk, she rounded up all the civilian personnel and made him watch while they were executed. The bitch threatened to do the same to the military officers. Watts didn't budge, and they were all executed, save for two: a Sangheli Field Master and Staff Sergeant Johnson here."

Daala recognized the black Sergeant. She had interrogated him for hours, and gotten curses in return. He didn't look too happy to see her. The big green armored soldier was definitely what the UNSC called a 'Spartan'. She'd seen video footage of a single Spartan decimating two columns of Imperial troops, including the elite Dark Troopers. She couldn't believe that thisâ€|thingâ€|was human. Its movements were too precise for a human, yet too fluid for a droid. She watched in fascination as he quickly checked his armaments at lightning speed. Then she heard what the Captain was saying over their COM.

"We have captured a high ranking officer, and we have rescued five ODSTs. Requesting evac."

"_The ODSTs are fine, but that other officer is not your mission priority, Richards."_

"General, she's the Black Widow."

A pause on the other end. _"Ah, I see. We'll send a dropship to pick you up. Seetharaman out."_

Ten minutes later, the two captured officers and fourteen Marines crowded into the Pelican's troop bay. Two elites, two Grunts and a Spartan watched from the ground as the dropship roared off toward Alpha Base, their temporary HQ.

"Well," said 'Partomee, "we should complete the mission."

Drake nodded. "I agree. Let's move out."

A/N: Hope it isn't too short for you. I need more time to come up with ideas for the MC and Repentant Orbit. Don't worry, Vader will be back soon.

13. Chapter 13: The Battle for Earth: Part I

Chapter 13

**1302 hrs**

**Inside Imperial Star Destroyer "Korriban"**

**Halo Installation 01**

John saw the golden teleportation rings fade away. He was surrounded by five Marines and Skywalker. He looked at Repentant Orbit. "Where are the others?"

"You are the most physically fit. I teleported the others to your ship."

"You can teleport that far?"

The Monitor paused. "Technically, no. but I boosted the power by using this installation's vastâ€¦"

John held up his hand. "That's enough. How much of the ship is Flood controlled?"

"Exactly 67.025"

"Great," muttered John. "Cortana, how're the Imperials doing?"

"The Imperial battle net is in complete chaos. The troops stationed on this ship are the 501st legion, the best Imperial troops ever encountered, but they're having a tough time retaking the ship."

John looked out through a viewport. Outside, five TX-130 fighter tanks and a squad of ATSTs, supported by nearly five hundred troops, drove against a tidal wave of Flood. John was impressed by the way they fought. In spite of a lack of leadership, they were doing a fine job. Even so, the Flood weren't giving up easily. As he watched, an ATST was hit by multiple rockets, and it exploded, erasing a file of troopers along with it.

"Cortana, contact Captain Keyes. Tell her we need to know where the NOVA is." Seconds later, Keyes came in.

"_The NOVA is apparently near the ship's bridge. Take it to the engine room; the NOVA and the reactors of the ship itself should be sufficient enough to destroy Halo. Not to mention half of the 501st."_

"Yes ma'am. I'm on it. Spartan-117 out." He had a job to do.
"Marines, let's move out."

It took the better part of half an hour to reach the bridge. They fought their way through waves of Flood (no pun intended) and a gauntlet of Imperial troops. These were different Imperial troops. They wore black armor, similar in design to normal scout trooper armor. Their rifles fired in three bursts, pinkish bolts that were strong enough to take down a quarter of his shield in one shot.

"They appear to be the Imperial version of SpecOps troops," said Cortana. "Apparently, they're called 'Storm Commandos'."

"Nice to know." All five of the Marines were killed by the time John was able to avenge them. Skywalker opened the bridge door.

The bridge had triangular windows. Through the middle ran a raised platform. On either side of the platform were ops stations. At the main console, however, was something the Master Chief had seen before, and never wanted to see again. The Command Form of the Flood was slumped over the console. Its surface was covered in tortured human faces.

"Talk about dÃ©jÃ vu," said Cortana. "Look! The NOVA!"

She was right. The NOVA sat next to the lethargic beast at the console. It was half John's size, triangular in shape.

"There's no need to lug that all the way down to the engine room. The detonation should trigger the reactors from here," said Cortana.
"Flick that switch to activate it."

As he did so, a timer appeared in his HUD, counting down from fifteen minutes. "There, that should give us enough time to take the emergency shuttle and get to the _Iroquois._"

The Flood, however, had different ideas. His motion sensor painted multiple targets, and the appearance of several combat Forms assured him he was in Freak Central. The Master Chief greased half of them with a captured thermal detonator. The Imperial device was half again as powerful as a frag grenade, which was a good thing, because the detonation triggered the grenades carried by another combat form. The bastards were swallowed up in a gout of flame. "You must be the luckiest cyborg alive," said Cortana.

"You call that lucky? I'd be lucky if the Flood just lie down and die."

"Come with me," said the Jedi, "I'll lead you to the emergency shuttle."

Both men ran faster than they ever had. Luke had to use the Force to stay ahead of the Spartan. Finally, they arrived at the shuttle. The ship was in the midst of a battle between the Flood and the Storm Commandos. The black armored troopers cut down freaks with expert precision, but they had no chance against the Flood.

John and Luke didn't wait to see the show. They raced up the ramp, and Skywalker took the controls. The shuttle screamed out of the bay. John looked below. The battle was still going on, but the Imperials were losing. The Sentinels had joined the carnage, but even then, there was no hope. He looked at his timer.

00:34

00:33

00:32

There was a sudden turbulence, followed by weightlessness as the shuttle cleared the atmosphere of the ring world.

00:16

00:15

00:14

Keyes cleared the shuttle, it entered the fighter bay, and the _Iroquois_ pushed its engines to the limit as it raced away from Halo.

00:03

00:02

00:01

00:00

Boom time.

**1340 hrs**

Aboard Imperial Star Destroyer "Eviscerator"

Vader appeared on the bridge of the other Imperial ship in the middle of some very surprised officers. Ignoring them, he made a beeline for the captain.

"Captain, bring us within view of the ring world."

"Ye-yes, Lord Vader." The ship accelerated from its orbit around the gas giant and soon had Halo within view, as well as a UNSC destroyer. Vader watched as it suddenly accelerated from the ancient construct. As the UNSC vessel flew away, Halo suddenly exploded. Vader watched; it was both fascinating and horrifying. The magnificent construct fragmented into several pieces, and the landscape of green, blue and brown suddenly changed to an icy white as the environment systems

failed and everything froze over. Finally, the smaller pieces of debris fell toward the planet, while the larger fragments started to orbit it. The voice of the captain stirred him from his reverie.

"Lord Vader, the UNSC ship is in range. Shall we pursue?"

"No. Set a course for Kamino. Half of the 501st has been slaughtered. We need more troops."

"Yes Lord Vader. When you were away, we received a message from Admiral Motti at Agra-II. The message confirmed the sudden presence of over a hundred UNSC ships. All contact with Motti was lost. Later, Acting Admiral O'Fee announced that enemy troops had landed on the surface at strategic points. After that, no contact." Vader said nothing, so he continued. "There is good news, however. Admiral Daala, following the coordinates on the artifact we found, stumbled upon Earth." Vader looked up. Thus encouraged, the captain continued. "Their defense grid is similar to the ones we've encountered so far: large projectile cannons, apparently called Orbital Magnetic Accelerator Cannons. The difference, however, is that there are three hundred of them, plus a 'home fleet' of about a hundred UNSC ships and twenty Covenant ships. Daala outnumbers them, but she knows the danger of the orbital guns. She's currently holding position around the sixth planet of the system."

Vader was surprised. He had begun losing hope of finding the UNSC's elusive home world, but, once combined with the other Imperial ships bound to be near Kamino and Coruscant, Earth would fall.

"Continue to Kamino. Tell Admiral Daala to hold her position. I will arrive with reinforcements."

**1342 hrs**

**Aboard UNSC Destroyer "Iroquois"**

Captain Miranda Keyes watched the dagger-shaped Imperial ship engage its slip space engines and disappear. "They're running," she murmured, "even though they had the advantage. I wonder why." She turned to the Master Chief, Lieutenant Singh, and Fred-104. "I'm not going to sugar coat this; the Imperials have found Earth."

"How?" demanded the shocked Singh.

"Your guess is as good as mine. Hypothesize, Lieutenant."

Singh stroked his beard. "Agra-II has a Forerunner artifact on it. A sort of directory, listing the positions of several planets or systems. Earth happens to be on it."

Keyes nodded. "Hood and the Arbiter came up with the same conclusion. But how doesn't matter now. Agra-II was a success; Allied forces are mopping up the rest of the Imperials. Hood, the Arbiter, and the Republic's Admiral Ackbar have come up with a fleet of three hundred and ninety ships to reinforce the fleet at Earth. The preliminary reports place the number of Imperial ships at two hundred. They are currently holding position around Saturn. Whoever's leading them doesn't want to get near the orbital guns; he wants us to come to him, so he'll have the advantage."

"Ma'am," said Lt. Singh, "There is a danger."

"Go on."

"Vader had an advantage over us, but he ran. We got the message from Earth; there's no reason why he shouldn't have gotten one from the enemy in the Sol system. There's only one reason why he ran: to get reinforcements. We know that the Empire has a vast fleet. They didn't even blink when we beat the tar out of them at Chiron. Instead, they returned the favor with ten times the ships they initially started the attack with. They'll come with more ships."

"The important thing is to get to Earth immediately. Cortana, plot a straight course to Earth."

"The Cole Protocol states--"

"The protocol was for the continued secrecy of Earth. That has been shattered, now. There are no colonies anywhere near here. Time is of the essence. Cortana, plot a straight course to Earth. That's an order."

"Yes, ma'am."

**1504 hrs**

**In orbit around Earth**

**Above East European Protectorate**

Hood had just finished speaking to Admiral Freemont and General Zyteslav. Tiring, to say the least. The Arbiter had suggested going on the offensive, but the Imperials had decided to brave Saturn's asteroid field to prevent the UNSC or the Covenant from attacking. Most UNSC ships had no shields, and the Covenant ships' shields couldn't handle the large asteroids. The Imperial ships had stronger shields and fired explosive bolts at any asteroid that came too near. It was all too plain that the Imperials were waiting for reinforcements. To that end, the Arbiter requested the New Covenant High Council for a hundred additional ships. Though the Council had the power to deny his request, he commanded a lot of respect; he expected the ships to arrive soon. The shipyards at Zeta Doradus had promised to send ten additional Zanzibar-class destroyers fitted out with the Plasma MAC cannons. Totally, the Allied Fleet, as the combined fleets were called, consisted of six hundred and twenty ships, an astounding number. The Imperials obviously knew, and they were keeping their distance.

Ackbar had told him that the company that manufactured the Imperial ships, Kuat Drives, had massive shipyards that could spew out five ships each within the hour. And there were hundreds of shipyards and no lack of captains to pilot each ship. It was unbelievable, but Hood knew that that was the only way the Imperials had given such a massive response to their initial defeat at Chiron. Although the Imperials had lost their main resupply line at Agra-II, they would prefer bypassing the planet and make a beeline for Earth. Ackbar had predicted that the Imperials would arrive with at least five hundred extra ships. With seven hundred ships, the attackers had numerical superiority. Whoever led the fleet in Saturn's ring had no qualms

about being in close quarters; he'd charge right in. The Allied Command, now known as AlCom, had formulated a plan based on that. The Fleet would position themselves between the orbital guns. As the Imperials charged in, they would come under a barrage of super dense projectiles, plasma torpedoes, pulse lasers and turbo laser bolts. Then it would be a matter of protecting the orbital guns, preventing the Imperials from landing, and trying to stay alive. The notion of preventing the bastards from landing was ludicrous: the loss of one gun platform would be sufficient enough to create a large enough gap in the defense. To that end, UN forces all over the planet had mobilized. Given the fact that the Imperials had found Earth from coordinates on a Forerunner artifact, most of the ground forces were stationed in what remained of New Mombassa. At any rate, the Ark would be protected.

The board was set, and the pieces were ready to move.

**1504 hrs**

**Imperial Super Star Destroyer "Knight Hammer"**

**In orbit around Saturn**

Admiral Daala stared out at the asteroid field of the planet designated EHS-06. She had seen a long range shot of the UNSC home world. Although it wasn't the type of view she wanted, it was enough. Five hundred and ten enemy ships and three hundred orbital guns. It was a force that would easily blow her small fleet apart. Although she didn't like it, she had express orders from Darth Vader to hold her fire and to avoid any conflict with the enemy until he arrived. So here she was, dodging asteroids and enemy ships. It was infuriating. She knew that the male officers didn't think she was capable simply because she was a woman. She knew that even with her small fleet, she could best the defenders. And that was what she intended to do.

"Commander, tell the fleet to assume attack formation."

"But sir, Lord Vaderâ€" "

"I know what Lord Vader said. Continue."

"Yes, sir."

She smiled a not-so-friendly smile. Now was her chance to prove everyone wrong, including that black armored pet of the Emperor. "Plot a straight course for Earth itself. Ignore the ships. Target three consecutive orbital guns. That will give us the opening we need. Once we are in the gap, the enemy won't be able to fire for fear of hitting their own forces on the ground." It would be a glorious day for the Empire.

**1600 hrs**

**Cairo Station (MAC Platform)**

**Earth**

Admiral Roland Freemont stood at ease, staring out of the immense view ports. Out there, somewhere, was the Imperial invasion force.

Fleet Admiral Harper was against waiting for the Imps to come, but the bastards were crafty. They had destroyed three patrol cutters and evaded the Covenant task force sent to destroy them. Rather than split up the entire force and have them nibbled up, Fleet Admiral Hood had ordered the Fleet to stay together, with the exceptions of the frigates and destroyers on patrol duty. Freemont was in charge of the Alpha Group fleet, which was tasked to protect the North African Protectorate and the Ark. It was another 'phony war'. With the exceptions of the cutters and an Imperial recon squadron, no serious action had taken place. Yet. A gentle pinging startled Freemont out of his reverie.

"Sir, the Imperials are on the move."

"On what vector?"

"Straight for us, sir. They're moving at attack speed. Only twenty ships."

"Twenty?" The Imperials were getting dumber, it seemed. "What classes?"

"Nineteen Victory-class Star Destroyers and a Super Star Destroyer, the big son of a bitch in front."

It's begun, hasn't it? "Open a secure channel to Admiral Hood."

Seconds later, Hood answered. "_What is it, Roland?"_

"Sir, the Imperials have begun their attack. Looks like their CO wants all the glory to himself."

"_How many ships?"_

"Twenty," answered Freemont.

"_I think it's a trap. Blow 'em to hell, Admiral. Hood out.'"_

"Sir," said the man at radar ops, "they'll be in firing range within five minutes."

"Ready the MAC cannons. Bring the fleet up to combat alert Alpha. Durandal?" This last remark was directed at the station's AI.

"Yes, sir?"

"Open up as soon as they're in range. Focus your fire on that Super Star Destroyer."

"Aye aye, sir." The AI's ghostly figure vanished.

"_This is Fleet Admiral Harper. We're engaging the enemy.'"_

"Not a good idea sir. It'll limit the choices of targets for the orbital guns," said Freemont.

"_Understood, son. Holding position.'"_

"Sir!" cried the man at radar ops, "additional contacts! Nearly three

hundred boarding craft!"

Alright, if that's what they want. "Spartan-058, defend this station at all costs."

"_Yes sir. Spartan-058 out."_

Durandal sounded the alarm. "_Attention all combat personnel. Please report to your action stations. This is not a drill, repeat, this is not a drill. 7th Platoon, secure airlocks. 8th platoon, link up with 13th tactical at bulkhead Bravo 04. Attention all personnel, we are engaging the enemy. External and internal contact imminent. Fire teams: sensors show inbound Imperial boarding craft. Stand by to repel boarders."_

Hood was next. "_Harper, form a defensive perimeter around the cluster."_

"_Sir, a Covenant battle group is already on its way."_

Sure enough, thirty silver Covenant ships, four carriers, ten cruisers, six destroyers and ten frigates, appeared right in front of Cairo station. They moved slowly out of the path of the orbital guns.

"Sir!" said Durandal, "increasing energy readings from the underside of the lead ship."

"Magnify that section." What appeared to be a cylinder with a radar dish at one end was slung underneath the Star Destroyer's belly. As he watched, eight beams of green energy from different points on the radar dish converged with a ninth, releasing a lethal beam that speared the lead Covenant Carrier. It burst into tiny fragments and it faded from the tactical display. "Jesus Christ! Durandal, what in God's name was that?"

"It appears to be the Imperial version of a pulse laser, but exponentially more powerful."

"_This is Admiral Ackbar. Stay out of firing range of that Star Destroyer. Release your single fighters and take it out the hard way. Otherwise, it will destroy you one by one."_

"Alright. All Longsword pilots, prepare for combat."

"_Alert! Boarders in habitat Alpha! Dozens of the white-armored bastards plus some officers. Use those grenades, dammit! Peterson, grenade! Be advised, sir, they're heading right for the command deck."_

At this, the tech crews and the officers made a mad dash for the weapons locker. Freemont managed to get a MA5B and a shotgun with forty shells. As a high ranking officer, he accumulated a guard of five Naval personnel. A tech hit the control for the room's only blast door just as a handful of stormtroopers rounded the corner. The door began to glow red-hot as the Imperials burned their way through.

Boom.

Molten metal flew everywhere as white armored stormtroopers jumped into the room. The room was thick with the noise of blaster bolts and the clatter of automatic weaponry. Red bolts of energy burned smoking holes in white dress uniforms and 7.62 mm armor-piercing rounds riddled stormtrooper armor.

Freemont ejected the AR's spent magazine and pumped a round into the chamber of his M90 tactical shotgun. A stormtrooper peeked around the desk the Admiral was using as cover, and received a facefull of eight-gauge buckshot for his curiosity. Another was shot in the back as the trooper aimed at a wounded crewman.

"Marines!" yelled Freemont, "Grenades!" Five seconds later, ten fragmentation grenades wiped out nearly twenty-five stormtroopers. The downside was that one of the transparent view ports shattered.

Stormtroopers, Marines, naval techs and officers flew out through the vacuum before the emergency barrier came down with a crash. When Freemont caught his breath, he noticed that almost all the stormtroopers were dead. The survivors had bugged out. When Freemont looked out the window, he wished he hadn't. Dozens of his own men and many troopers floated about the platform in a cloud of their own freeze-dried blood. Durandal's voice rang out over the COM.

"_8th platoon, send reinforcements to the command deck. Skeleton crews, report to your action stations." _To the Admiral the AI said, "That blast has disabled the fire control. We're sitting ducks. I can bring it back online, but not in time."

Freemont watched as the immense enemy flagship roared over the now inert station. The monster laser was missing from its undercarriage; the Longsword pilots were successful. However, Freemont knew that a ship that size could spew out over a hundred thousand troops. He opened a frequency to Hood. "This is Admiral Freemont."

"_Go ahead."_

"The enemy flagship has just bypassed us."

"_I know. Luckily, they're the only ones who made it through. We've beat the tar out of the others; they're scrap metal now. I'll inform General Strauss. Right now, focus on repairing that station. Good luck, Hood out."_

Freemont looked at Earth. The dagger shape of the Imperial ship was rapidly dwindling, but there was no doubt as to where it was going: New Mombassa, North African Protectorate. Time to send in the Marines.

14. Chapter 14:The Battle for Earth: Part II

Chapter 14

**1630 hrs**

**UNSC Destroyer "Iroquois"**

**Sol System**

**Earth**

Captain Miranda Keyes stared at the charred remains of nineteen Star Destroyers. She had escaped from Halo, only to emerge from the jump in the midst of a hundred-and-twenty strong Imperial fleet meandering about Saturn. Cortana had just enough time to plot an intra system jump that landed them at Earth. There had been a fight; the wrecks of the ships testified to that. Keyes no longer wondered why. Over six hundred ships were orbiting the planet, the largest fleet she had ever seen. The COM crackled.

"_This is the UNSC patrol cutter HPF-115. Please identify yourself."_

"This is Captain Miranda Keyes of the UNSC destroyer _Iroquois_, responding to the immediate recall of all ships."

"_Understood. Proceed to rally point _Gaia_ and await further orders."_

"Negative, patrol, I have highly classified material that must be given directly to HighCom."

"_Acknowledged. Please proceed to the rally point while we confirm what you have said."_

Although frustrating, Keyes knew that the procedure was needed. It was implemented after a small group of Imperial storm commandos infiltrated the shipyards at Zeta Doradus using a UNSC shuttle.

"Iroquois_, your identity and mission has been confirmed. You are permitted to launch a shuttle craft to rendezvous with Fleet Admiral Hood in the _Abukir_. Welcome home."_

Ten minutes later, a shuttle carrying a captain, an ONI lieutenant, a Jedi and two Spartans docked with the Super Carrier _Abukir_. She was the pride of the UNSC Fleet. Newly outfitted with seven plasma turrets, two MAC guns, three meters of Titanium-A armor plating and a compliment of two hundred Longsword heavy fighters, she was undoubtedly the strongest vessel in the Fleet. She had last seen action as an unmodified ship during the defense of Earth. Compared to her, the _Iroquois_ was tiny.

As soon as the five stepped out onto the landing deck, Admiral Hood was there to greet her. As was a man in jet-black dress uniform. She had seen him once before: Colonel John Hathaway. He had stepped up recently to head ONI Section 3. Not much was known about him; he was a shady character. But from what she had heard, his morals were in the right place.

Hood stepped forward. "It's good to see you again, Miranda. The Imperials have managed to land at New Mombassa, so things are a little hectic right now." He greeted the others. "Master Chief."

"Sir."

"Fred."

He saluted with the Chief.

"Singh."

He nodded.

"Skywalker."

They shook hands.

"Allow me to introduce Colonel Hathaway, head of ONI Section 3."

Hathaway smiled. "A pleasure to meet you, Captain. An even greater pleasure to meet two Spartans. And Commander Skywalker. Captain, Master Chief, Singh: please report to my office. We will be safe from any eavesdroppers there. Right this way."

They were led to a small room, sparsely furnished with a desk, a computer, and a couple of chairs.

Hathaway sat down. "Report, Captain."

"Based on the information Lt. Singh discovered in the Ackerson Files, we jumped to the specified coordinates and found a Halo. However, there were two Imperial Star Destroyers in the area. One was patrolling the nearby gas giant, while the other was holding position three hundred meters above the station's surface. I landed a platoon of ODSTs under the command of Lieutenant Singh and Chief Petty Officer Frederic-104 to plant a NOVA in or near the Imperial ship. A select company of the best marines were sent to assist the Master Chief and Commander Skywalker here to capture or kill Darth Vader, who happened to be on Halo."

"Good work, Captain. I'll have your report next, Singh."

Singh swallowed. "We landed successfully and met minimal resistance at first. Resistance increased about a click from the objective. Then we were attacked by the Flood. Most likely, they were released due to the enemy's clumsiness. The attack took us completely by surprise. By the time we were able to get our bearings, half of our strength was absorbed by the Flood. The only good thing was that the Imperials took exception to this threat and focused their attacks on the parasite, enabling us to continue on to our objective. It seemed that the Flood had launched a concerted attack on the enemy ship, and we were forced to send another company to take the NOVA to the ship's bridge. We put up a fierce resistance, but in the end, the attacks of both the Imperials and the Flood reduced us to only twenty men. Captain Keyes evacuated us. Spartan-117 continued our mission."

"Good, good. Don't feel too bad about the loss of your men, lieutenant: the Flood is a dangerous enemy, and I would be surprised if anything short of a Spartan could best them. Master Chief, I'll have your report now."

"Yes sir. Our Pelican took fire while landing us, and it crashed. We eliminated Imperial presence in the area and discovered that we were in close vicinity of the Control Room. We made our way up,

neutralizing light Imperial resistance, and secured the Control Room. Cortana discovered a small group coming up behind us. Not knowing whether it was friend or foe, we closed the blast doors. It was later opened from the other side, and we saw that it was Vader, accompanied by five Sentinels and the Monitor of the Installation, 007 Repentant Orbit. After a short duel with Vader, I managed to incapacitate him by cutting off his right arm. The Monitor teleported him away, presumably to his other ship. I convinced the Monitor to assist us in destroying Halo, and he subsequently teleported me and six others including Skywalker inside the crashed Imperial ship. Although we lost five men to Imperial SpecOps troopers, we managed to reach the bridge, where we discovered both the NOVA and a Flood Command or brain Form. After triggering the NOVA, we escaped via an enemy shuttle. The ring was completely destroyed."

"Excellent, Master Chief. I'm curious, however, about the SpecOps part. May I see that part of the recording?"

"Yes, sir." The video showed what appeared to be scout troopers in non-reflective black armor. Hathaway froze and magnified one who was making a run for cover. He focused on the weapon and compared it to a standard blaster. The enhanced one was twice as large.

"Hm. Cortana, how do blasters work?"

Cortana's blue figure appeared on the desk. "The basic blaster technology of intensifying a beam of light into a deadly bolt is scalable, and largely the same despite the differences in weapon types and sizes. A squeeze of a trigger emits volatile blaster gas into a conversion chamber, where it is excited by energy from the weapon's power source. The agitated gas is then funneled through the actuating blaster module, where it is processed into an intense particle beam. A prismatic crystal focuses the beam, and passes it through a refinement chamber which "galvens" the beam into its final bolt."

"So, this must be more powerful because it uses more gas, and a more powerful type of gas. Where do you suppose gas like that can be found?"

"There is a large amount of it in Jupiter's atmosphere."

Hathaway slammed his fist on the table. "That's it! According to the New Republic data, that super laser they used on the Covenant is part of a larger project called the Death Star. Earth is far from any known part of Imperial or Republic space, a perfect place to build a deadly space station far from nosy people. Jupiter provides a large source of gas for their weapons. From here, they can launch a powerful attack that would see to the end of the New Republic. In the meantime, we will be used as slaves. That's why they attacked us in the first place. They didn't expect us to resist, they being technologically superior and all. Well, now that we knowâ€¦ Master Chief, you and all Spartans present here will go groundside to take the fight to the surface."

Suddenly, Cortana said, "Alert! Incoming enemy ships. I count eight hundred."

Hathaway paled. "Jesus!"

Over the ship's COM, Hood sounded the alert. _"All personnel, report to your action stations. This is not a drill, repeat, this is not a drill. Fire teams, report to your positions. All pilots prepare to engage. Good luck, Hood out." _On a private channel to the Master Chief and Fred, Hood said "You two will depart for the _Malta II _MAC station on the double. After you're done, report to the surface. Hood out."

"It's going to be a busy day, sir," said Fred.

"I know. Gear up, Spartan. We have a job to do."

****Personal Log****

****Cpl. Don Narively, 205th Marine Division****

****12/25/2557****

****1400 hrs****

I heard from my pal Sam that the Imps landed in New Mombassa and that the 205th was being shipped out to Africa. I hate it when these guys just pop up out of no where. I still have butterflies in my stomach; the last time I fired a weapon was in basic. When I get my first crack at the Imps, I hope I'll live to remember it.

****1600 hrs****

It looks like I'll live after all. As soon as the ship landed, we dropped into the older part of the city. Not too long after that, we met our first stormtroopers. Dozens of the white bastards ran at us, but we beat them off. Sam got hit. He's in the med tent now. The medic says he'll be fine. Sgt. Fletcher spotted an Imperial walker, some giant metal camel. It blew right through our position and walked on, gay as you like. Took twenty of our guys with it. The Loot got hit badly. The medic said he probably wouldn't make it. The Sarge is in command now. He's called for more guys to hold off the mothers. They'd better send a whole platoon.

****1700 hrs****

When I saw only one Pelican, I thought that the brass had lost faith in us and was sending a funeral detail. Then I saw them: Spartans. Real honest-to-god Spartans. Too bad there's only two of 'em. A couple of guys from the 105th came with 'em. Nasty people, them Helljumpers.

1700 hrs****

New Mombassa****

Grid kilo three-seven****

The Master Chief stepped out of the Pelican's troop bay, followed by Fred and ten ODSTs. Their faces were hidden beneath their helmets' reflective visors, but John knew they were filled with hostility; Helljumpers considered themselves to be the best in the UNSC, and therefore the Spartans were direct competitors. John wasn't fazed, however, and tersely told the company Sergeant to continue on ahead. He approached a Marine who was identified as Corporal Don Narively.

It was plain that the man had little or no experience in combat.

"Sir, Corporal Narively, A-Company. CP's this way." He jogged off. John followed him to a man laid down on a medical cot. The man had lost an arm and his abdomen had a small hole from which blood flowed. It coated the cot, the ground underneath it, and the hands of the medic who worked on him.

The medic wiped his brow. "I'm calling it, 1705 hours. He's gone."

The corporal shook his head. "The El-tee got hit when this giant thing marched right through here."

"Who's in command now, corporal?" asked the Master Chief.

"Uhh, Sergeant Fletcher, sir. He's on the other side. Follow me."

The two Spartans followed the Marine passed a group firing on an unseen target, onto a small hallway that led to a high walled terrace. A Marine crouched behind it.

"Hey Private!" shouted Narively.

"What?"

"Is it clear?" Just then, an explosion blew away half of the wall. Miraculously, the Marine survived.

"Does it bloody look clear to you!"

The corporal cursed in his native language. "Alright, sir, we'll have to go at a run. Covering fire!"

The corporal's aim was admirable. Three bursts from his BR55 and three stormtroopers fell. John and Fred threw grenades, killing another seven. The wall of the terrace abruptly halted, giving way to a much smaller wall. Where the two walls met lay Sergeant Fletcher. He clutched his side where a blaster bolt had hit him.

"When I asked for back up, I didn't think they'd send two Spartans," said the injured man. While he spoke, the large hull of an ATAT walker came into view. The thing was three blocks away. It fired at the building adjacent to the Master Chief's position. Insta-crete vaporized and fell in burning chunks, but the building held. "They're trying to bring the building down on us. We have to take it out. Give me covering fire while I call in for air support." He crawled to a position which allowed him a clear channel. Unfortunately, that position was vulnerable to enemy fire.

John thought quickly. "Fred, take out any snipers you see. Corporal, give me supporting fire while I man the machine gun."

12.7x99 mm rounds tore into the heart of the advancing stormtroopers as John unleashed hell. Narively fired his BR55 rapidly: twelve bursts and seven troopers fell as the 7.62 mm armor piercing bullets made a quick end to their lives. Four 14.5x114 mm APFSDS rounds split the air and cut down four scout troopers that had made it to the roof

tops, victims of the Spartans' second best sniper. The ODSTs released a load of grief in the form of grenades and well placed fire. Within thirty seconds, forty stormtroopers lay dead. The ten survivors ran.

"No!" yelled the corporal, "come back here you sons of bitches! I'm not through with you yet!" the other Marines agreed vigorously.

Just then, two dark wedges flew overhead: Longsword bombers. They released their payload on the metal behemoth, which turned into a second sun. When the sky cleared, there was no sign of the ATAT.

Fletcher grinned weakly. "Now that's what I call a light show. Master Chief, sir, move on ahead." The man then fainted, and the medics hustled him away.

"Alright. Marines! Move out! Search for the bastards in the debris. Expect close contact."

The Marines responded with an enthusiastic 'yes sir' and ran ahead, the corporal taking point and the Master Chief right behind him.

"Contact!" yelled Narively as he fired at something behind a ruined wall. "Lots of contact. They're all over the damn place!"

"Move back, corporal!" yelled John. "Grenade!" Five grenades went off with a loud bang. Bits of white armor and flesh flew everywhere.

The Imperials responded quickly. "Take cover!" yelled a Marine as three thermal detonators landed three meters away. The ensuing blast killed five Marines who had carelessly run right into them. The Chief picked up an M41 SSR Jackhammer rocket launcher and tossed it to Narively, who nodded a thanks. The remaining Marines rushed as one and completely overwhelmed the two troopers that had been hiding around the corner. The hole in the adjacent wall led to a parallel street. In that street were twenty stormtroopers and a TX-130 fighter tank.

There was a 'bang! whoosh!' sound right next to the Chief's ear. A second later, the tank exploded.

"Merry Christmas, you bastards!" yelled the corporal. He fired another rocket right at the Imperial formation and literally blew it apart. He dropped the spent launcher and loaded a fresh one. Just then, two Warthogs came up the road. One only held a driver.

"Could use some guys," said the driver. Narively jumped into the passenger seat and John manned the 'Hog's Gauss cannon. Fred jumped up behind the other 'Hog's M41 LAAG. Both took off together.

"Where to?" asked the corporal.

"We're going to the city center. ONI spooks are gathering as many troops as possible to guard the Ark."

"Aren't we the lucky ones," muttered Cortana. "Well, Covenant ground forces are landing all over the city. Looks like we'll have some help."

****A/N:** Yep, I incorporated myself into the story. Hope you like me, though I don't really mind if you don't. ******

15. Chapter 15: The Bastogne of AgraII

Chapter 15

****1400 hrs****_

****Agra-II****_

****Continent AG03****_

****New Mumbai****_

The Imperial ATAT walker was an impressive piece of machinery. Covered in high density armor and light particle shielding, it was impervious to most UNSC issue weapons. However, its 'head' was the only place where weapons were located. It had no point defense and had a large blind spot in the rear. Which explained why a smaller but more maneuverable Covenant Scarab was able to scuttle behind the metal behemoth and hole it from stem to stern with a large blast from its main cannon.

Field Master Jeki 'Setaporamee chuckled as the other two ATAT walkers clumsily turned around and tried to engage him. They were distracted by a squadron of Wraith mortar tanks. The Imperials took exception to this threat, and seemingly forgot about the Scarab. A fatal mistake.

"Target the one on the right," barked the Field Master.

"Yes, Excellency." Ten seconds later, a burning hole appeared in the side of the said walker, and it collapsed. The pilot of the other walker apparently found it hard to make up his mind to target the Scarab or the tanks, but he was spared the decision when a lance of plasma burned off the command 'head', ending his life.

"Continue onward toward the city where we will link up with the human's armor division."

"Yes, Excellency."

The Scarab marched on through the abandoned residential area, crushing cars and enemy tanks that smoldered on the side of the road. Suddenly, from behind a house, five green rockets lanced forward and pulverized the Scarab's right forefoot. The pilot frantically jabbed at the controls, and he managed to right the machine.

"Whaâ€¦" began the Field Master, when the middle-right leg was destroyed. The Scarab stumbled, sending Elites and Grunts tumbling to the decks. "Out!" yelled 'Setaporamee. "Everyone out!"

The gangway fell with a clang, and ten Elites and fifteen Grunts ran out. Behind them, the Scarab groaned, then fell over, gouging out asphalt. 'Setaporamee pulled out a Plasma Rifle and scanned the area. His helmet sensors showed multiple contacts behind the house the rockets had come from. The trespassers were clumsy, bunching up

together like that. He walked over to a Grunt, yanked a Fuel Rod gun from the alien's grip, aimed, and fired. A green orb of lethal energy arced right into the hidden Imperial troops, killing five. The flash of light was all 'Setaporamee needed to count the number of enemies. There were forty, spread out in four different groups. They moved to enclose his troops.

"Warriors!" cried the Field Master, "prepare for combat!"

The Elites responded with a roar. The Grunts weren't so enthusiastic, but they had great respect for 'Setaporamee, and loaded their Needlers and Fuel Rod guns. Others checked the charge on their plasma pistols.

"We will have to cut through the vermin and reach the human forces alive. Spare the enemy none of your wrath."

Then, the attack started.

Red energy bolts flew through the air with deadly precision, cutting down five Grunts. Their phosphorescent blue blood coated the road. One of the Pilots was hit several times. His shielding faded, white-hot red teardrops slammed into his armor, and purple blood ran down in rivulets. The Elite fell to his knees, managed to fire off one last shot, fell on his face and died. The shot hit an Imperial officer square in the chest, and the man stayed alive long enough to stare at the hole before keeling over. A Grunt fired a flurry of needles that chased down a trooper and blew him to bits. 'Setaporamee charged and ignited his energy sword. The heathen seemed surprised by the weapon, yelling something that sounded like 'Jedi'. Before they had time to react, three lost their heads to the glowing blade, and another found it embedded in his chest. The other eight Elites opened up in earnest with a mix of plasma rifles and carbines, killing three more. The gap was opened, and the group charged out. One of the Grunts primed a plasma grenade, and the diminutive alien threw it with good accuracy; it adhered to a trooper and exploded, erasing another five. 'Setaporamee ran. He knew that, on their hands, the Grunts were very fast, so there was no need to slow down. Soon he could hear the rumble of human vehicles. Sure enough, two vehicles, what the humans called 'warthogs', sped passed them, their occupants yelling greetings like 'about time you showed up' and such. A squad of eight men ran up to him, while two human tanks rumbled past him. 'Setaporamee was once a tank commander, and he had learned to respect the human's vehicles. One of the men ran up to him.

"Sergeant Wyatt, Pathfinders, 101st. You must beâ€|?"

"Field Master Jeki 'Setaporamee, Covenant Third Army of Reparation. I had come to link up with your armored division, but my Scarab was disabled about half a unit back that way."

The human sighed and shook his head. "We've had trouble with them too. They've engaged in guerilla warfare. Hit and run tactics," he said, seeing the Elite's blank look. "We've rooted most of them out of the main city, but others are playing possum round the suburbs. We wouldn't have realized they were there if they hadn't ambushed Charlie company. Now we're hard at work cleaning them out. What's worse is that the Imperials are regrouping to attack us. There's only five hundred troops here; most are scattered all over the damn place due to the misdrops. We have ten tanks plus the Wraiths you came in

with, not to mention twenty Warthogs. Now that you came, we have an additional five hundred."

"Who is your officer in command?"

"Lieutenant Nair, 52nd Airborne. He commands a mixed unit that consists of men he was able to gather from the misdrops. We're supposed to baby-sit a bridge that will give the Imperials a good place to cross their armor over the Kali River. If they manage to cross, we're to blow the bridge." He walked as he spoke. Soon, they reached a long bridge that stretched over a wide river. "The Imps hold the eastern sector. We just didn't have enough men to hold it. They placed stationary particle mortar cannons all along their side last night. We were shelled today morning. Lost two squads. We were reinforced later by some twenty wandering boys that missed their drop by ten miles. They were supposed to take a small town: Molgidi, or some goddamn place like that. Our original CO, Brigadier General Jeremiah Rosenberg, is lost somewhere. We would've sent some guys to look for him, but the bulk of our force is busy cleaning up the rest of the Imperials in this sector. Everyone else is guarding the bridge. We've put most of our rocket jockeys here. There are snipers on the rooftops, too. Stationary guns all over the place."

"Ammunition?"

"Enough for an hour of nonstop fire. Air support consists of some ten jacked-up Pelicans. We've fitted them with twenty Anvil-II missiles and a lot of ammo for their chin-guns. They're formidable enough. We had a single-person Falcon attack gunship, but the bastards shot it down. It's repairable, but we don't have the tools or the expertise."

"My Scarab had a Banshee attached to it. If we could go backâ€¦"

"No need." Wyatt tapped his COM. "Corporal? When you're done with the Imps, look for a Banshee on or near the Scarab. If it's workable, bring it to HQ."

"As for your attack craftâ€¦ I had ten Engineers arrive in a heavily protected transport. They can fix it."

"I hope so. I'll take you to the Loot. This way." He walked into a large, damaged house and stood in front of an overworked dark-skinned man sitting at a desk. Wyatt saluted, and the man tiredly returned the salute.

"Good work, Sergeant. Go about your duties." He looked up at the 8'6" tall Elite in gold armor. "You must be Field Master Jeki 'Setaporamee."

"Yes," replied the Elite, impressed by how well the human had pronounced his name.

"I'm Lieutenant Arun Nair, 52nd Airborne. I assume the Sergeant has debriefed you on our situation? Yes? Well, I'm afraid that's only half of it. The Imperials have amassed a force of ten thousand troops. They also have over a hundred tanks and ten ATAT walkers. Well, seven, thanks to you. We've established a small bridgehead at the other end. I have fifty men there. They'll hold them off long

enough for reinforcements to drop in. I hope. I was hoping that you would lend me some warriors to reinforce the bridgehead."

"Certainly. I will send a hundred warriors immediately, plus a Wraith."

"Thank you." It was plain, however, that the discussion wasn't over.

"Is there something else?"

Nair hesitated for a second. "ONI suspects there is a Forerunner artifact here in the city. We've combed this sector, but found nothing. Therefore, it is essential that we win."

"Why do they say that there is a sacred object here?"

"I think it has something to do with the Imperials finding Earth, but I'm not sure. Those damn spooks wouldn't say much. All they said was to hold the city, find the artifact and notify them when we do."

"I must warn you: If the Mirratord find the sacred object first, we will take it to Honest Colossus. It is due to no ill will; the Council came to the same decision as your 'ONI', and gave the order. I must follow it."

Nair looked at the Field Master and narrowed his eyes. "Hmm. Do what you must, but it would be a good idea if you share the information you find."

"That is for the Council to decide," said 'Setaporamee, his tone making it sure that his decision was final.

"Alright. I respect your decision, but I can't allow any of your warriors to search the city before the battle is over. Orders from HighCom. I can't do a thing about it."

'Setaporamee nodded. The human, however grudgingly, had accepted his decision, and he would do the same. "I bring news that the Council has authorized me to tell you. The Brutes, Jackals and Drones are gathering near the Brute home planet. Apparently, the filthy apes have met the Trespassers and have made a pact with them. What is more disturbing is that a Prophet is leading them."

"A Prophet?"

"Yes. The Mirratord identified him as the Prophet of Justice."

"Justice? I though all the prophets, brutes drones and jackals were killed."

"Not all of them. The Arbiter decided to show them mercy, and let them live on the condition that they were never to wage war again. It appears they have broken that promise. They overwhelmed our patrol at the planet, and took our ships. Twenty in total. Now they are part of a force that is heading for Earth. Things are looking bleak for your home planet."

Nair was overwhelmed. He thought of his wife in India, sitting at home with his daughter, blissfully unaware of what was about to befall them. "Does the Fleet stand a chance?"

"I do not know. Fleet Master Muki 'Satumee has been ordered by the council to take fifty ships to aid you, but that is all they can spare. We are sending a hundred ships to burn the Jiralhanae planet to nothing, and we are doing the same to the Kig-Yar and the Yanme. They will join the fighting at Earth, but I fear that it will be too late."

Just then, a panting Marine came in. "Sir! The Imperials are moving to assault the bridgehead!"

Nair quickly barked orders into his COM, and 'Setaporamee did the same. There was no time to lose.

**1800 hrs**

**UNSC Flagship/Super Carrier "Abukir"**

**Earth**

Hood stared at the tac display. Hundreds of Allied and Imperial Ships exchanged fire all around the planet. From the ground, it might look like a fantastic lightshow. What was going on inside was a different story. The screens showed hundreds of wrecked hulks, both Allied and Imperial. Thousands of little blue and red arrows represented the enemy fighters. What was worse was the presence of twenty Covenant ships under Brute control. They had formed a group called the 'Hand of Justice'. The Prophet of Justice himself had spoken to him.

Flashback

"_I am the High Prophet of Justice. You are the Earther's military leader, and I do not need to know your name; it is of no concern to me. It would be best if you surrender. Your death will be quick and painless that way. If not, you will suffer greatly. As for the Arbiter and the rest of his accursed race, they will not be allowed to attain salvation, nor transcend the physical in battle. They will become a race of servants, as will yours, and you will beg for death before the end."_

End Flashback

Durandal decided to send a reply that had pissed off the Covenant long before, at Alpha Halo. He opened the COM.

"He said I came not to bring peace, but a swordâ€¦"

It worked. The Prophet sent a reply, this time a quote from a certain parasite.

"_Fool! Your deaths will be instantaneous while we suffer the progress of infinitude!"_

Durandal opened the COM again, something a little more dark on his mind.

"Do you seek glory? Honor? You will find neither. Instead, you will find Death. And you will never see it coming."

The AI had succeeded in annoying the Prophet. They returned a reply.

"_We need not find Death. We are Death: the death of you. Honor and glory will be denied to you by those who came before, and your race will suffer damnation for all eternity. The Great Journey will begin soon, but all heretics and slaves will be denied salvation whilst we walk the path."_

Durandal was tired of bickering with the Prophet. He armed the MAC gun and fired a round directly at Justice's flagship. He coordinated with the other stations' AIs and twelve rounds flew towards the HoJ carrier. Two Brute ships moved to shield the carrier. They broke apart from the strain of ten MAC rounds. The other two made it through. The first took out the shields and the second slammed right into the nose. The ship listed slightly, but righted itself. Durandal was satisfied. Although he had failed in destroying the carrier, he had scared the Prophet enough for the creature to have most likely soiled its robes. He turned his attention to a Super Star Destroyer. With coordinated fire from the other platforms, he was able to sufficiently disable the craft. An alert pinged for his attention, and he triggered the station's auto cannons. A hundred boarding craft were destroyed. While part of him continued the battle, another part investigated the Imperial presence in New Mombassa. Sure, some had landed in Athens and Algiers, but most landed around the Ark's home city. He was sure that the Marines would hold out long enough for the Ark's defenses to activate. The hair-thin lasers it fired would carve an enemy ship into puzzle pieces. The problem was that the weapons required a great deal of power, and it would take exactly thirty-six hours for the Ark to power up. In the meantime, the Ark's only defense besides the Allied armies was the presence of the Sentinels and Enforcers. And four Spartans. The other four were en route from Agra-II; their services were no longer required there. Hood's voice brought the AI out of his reverie.

"Durandal, order the orbital platforms to target any HoJ ship and destroy it. Arm the Plasma MAC and fire directly at that Super Star Destroyer."

As the AI complied, he heard orders from Admiral Ackbar to his fighter squadrons and ships.

"_All units, target that Star Destroyer. Take out its heavy cannons so that we can bring ourselves in range."_

The voices of the Republic fighter pilots came too. "_Wedge! There's a TIE right on your six! Evade before he vapes your tail. Tycho, take Red Squadron and escort those Y-wings."_

Messages came from Athens. "_Fire! No, no, behind them! Be advised _Abukir_, Athens City is being completely overrun. Too many. They're targeting indiscriminately: civilians, soldiers, dogs, anything and everybody. We need reinforcements on the double. Fire your weapon, dammit! Oh, sh-" _There was nothing but static.

"What happened?" demanded Hood.

"Athens City is being totally overrun. They need reinforcements now."

Hood ran a hand over his bald head. "Send a call out to the 405th in Diego Garcia. They're being repositioned at Athens."

"Aye Sir."

Hood looked at the tac display. He noticed two UNSC ships fading off the display. "This is getting worse by the second. I might as well go out an airlock and holler for help."

"It's funny that you should say that, sir."

"Huh?"

"Fifty Covenant capital ships inbound. They're launching their fighters and boarding craft. And they've already destroyed three Star Destroyers."

Hood smiled. "You gotta hand it to them; those devils sure know how to make an entrance."

**1805 hrs**

New Covenant Cruiser "Humble Redemption"

**Earth**

Fleet Master Muki 'Satumee gazed out at the computer-filtered carnage. He felt anger boil up inside him as he saw the Prophet's ships. Doubtless they held the bodies of thousands of fellow warriors, taken by surprise and stabbed in the back by the filthy Jiralhanae. He had taken three Trespasser ships by surprise and destroyed them before they could react. The elation of that moment soured as he saw the burned hulks of hundreds of Allied ships. Many Imperial wrecks were there too; the defenders were fighting tooth and nail.

Heavy booted feet stepped up behind him. He knew that sound; it was one of the Spartans. "What is it, Spartan?"

"I request permission to assault that Super Star Destroyer."

"I was just planning that. Take ten SpecOps Sangheli with you, and take a boarding craft. May the Forerunners protect you."

Drake nodded a thanks and left the bridge. He had work to do.

A/N: Trespassers mean Imperials for the Covenant. For all those who had expected the Ark, I am sorry, but I need more time to work out more ideas.

16. Chapter 16: Rolling Thunder

Chapter 16

**1500 hrs**

**New Mumbai**

**Agra-II**

Private Whitefield panted as he ran up the road. The Jackhammer strapped to his back was weighing down on him, but still he ran up the slope, breath coming in short pants. Suddenly, he heard a rumbling behind him. Smoothly, he dropped his BR55 and whipped out his rocket launcher. There was a terrific 'bang' as the rocket embarked on its short journey to a TX-130 fighter tank. The rocket hit the armored vehicle, causing it to swerve erratically on its skittish repulsor-lift systems. When it finally regained control, it was too late. Whitefield had fired his last rocket, and the vehicle exploded. He smiled through clenched teeth, picked up his rifle and ran. He found an alley, turned the corner and found himself face-to-face with an Imperial stormtrooper. Without aiming, Whitefield fired. The bullets were dead on, and the trooper slumped to the ground. The Private saw three more troopers, still in shock. He shot all three, and reloaded his rifle with shaky hands. He hadn't been so close to death before. Suddenly he heard a voice behind him, like someone talking through a radio.

"Don't move, Earther."

Whitefield knew it was a stormtrooper. He silently cursed himself for not being aware of his surroundings. If Sergeant Wyatt was there, he would've gotten a guarantee of an ass-whooping.

"Put your weapon on the ground, Earther, and face me."

Whitefield turned around, and found himself staring down the barrel of a blaster rifle.

"This is for the Emperor," growled the trooper as he flicked off the blaster's safety. Before he could fire, green colored radio-active pellets punched their way into the side of the trooper's skull, and the trooper fell over. Whitefield quickly looked at the source of the fire. Holding a smoking carbine was a blue armored Elite. He quickly nodded his thanks and sped towards the bridge leading to the western sector. There, he found Sergeant Wyatt.

"Sir," panted Whitefield, "AA squad Alpha is KIA. I'm the only survivor of Beta squad. All other anti armor squads in this sector are retreating here. Sergeant Simmons is KIA, too. Fighter tanks are making their way here. Advise we call in for air support, sir."

Wyatt nodded. "You read my mind, son." He spoke into his COM. "HQ, this is Bravo Company. Requesting air support, over."

"_Bravo Company, this is HQ. A Falcon's on its way. What happened to Captain Corelli?"_

"He's KIA, sir. I'm in command now."

"_Sorry to hear it. HQ out."_

A scant minute later, the Falcon appeared. The Falcon gunship was similar in design to the Pelican dropship, except that they were expensive to make. They carried a grade-four AI that controlled the

dorsal and side .50 caliber machine guns. The aircraft carried a .70 mm chin gun and two Anvil-II rocket launchers fed by missile belts. This particular Falcon had three hundred missiles to fire, and the engines that were twice as powerful as a Pelican's had no problem holding the craft in the air. The Falcon was piloted by Warrant Officer Mohammed Al-Thani. He was an experienced Navy pilot that had seen action with both the Imperials and the Old Covenant. He spotted a fighter tank waltzing toward the bridge, and fired. The chin gun uttered a throaty roar as .70 mm rounds punched through the armor of the fighter tank and transformed it to Swiss cheese. His com crackled.

"_Thanks for the assist, Echo-412._"

Al-Thani grinned. "No problem, Bravo." He lifted the Falcon another ten meters and saw another fighter tank, with a twenty-strong infantry screen. Two Anvil-II missiles put an end to the tank, and the .50 auto guns turned the infantry screen into a puddle of red. Above, Al-Thani could see the Banshee circling the rooftops, killing off enemy snipers. Suddenly, an alert pinged. Al-Thani swore loudly in Arabic; the bastards had a lock on him. He pushed the Falcon's engines to the max to try and out-fly the rocket. He wasn't going to get shot down again. By the time the rocket was spent, he had gone nearly a mile from the bridge. Al-Thani swore again and raced back.

Whitefield could see the tank approaching, knew it was useless to try and run, and tried to find some cover. There was none. Whitefield raised his BR55. He could at least take out the turret gunner. The tank came into view, and the private fired and missed. He waited to burned.

****Boom****

Whitefield opened his eyes. The enemy tank was destroyed. He turned around to see the massive bulk of a Scorpion Main Battle Tank. He nodded a quick thanks and ran like he'd never run before. A Ghost pulled up to him, but the driver was sniped out of his seat. Shaking off the shock, the private jumped into the seat and slammed down on the controls. Like all soldiers of the UNSC, Whitefield had trained with Covenant vehicles before, and he knew exactly what he was doing. The machine propelled him to the western bank in two minutes. He nearly ran straight into a Sergeant, who his HUD identified as Sergeant Major Alonzo.

"You," barked the Sergeant, "with me. We're going to hold this end of the bridge. Reload on that launcher on the double."

"But sir, Sergeant Wyatt told me to—"

"No time, private! Gear up!"

Whitefield had no other choice. He tumbled out of the Ghost, picked up two launchers for the Jackhammer and a couple of reloads for the rifle and jogged after the Sergeant.

****1900 hrs****

****Athens City, East European Protectorate****

**Earth**

Military Police Officer Henderson glowered as he sat in the makeshift prison. An hour before, an Imperial ship had landed near the city and overwhelmed the tiny Marine contingent even though the police tried to help. Now, the Imperials were telling the inmates that Earth had fallen and there was no use resisting. Henderson didn't want to believe it, but with no support coming from anywhere, he wasn't so sure. The door of his cell opened, and a man in a black dress uniform was roughly shoved in by two stormtroopers. He was not very remarkable outwardly, but his eyes glittered with intelligence. For some reason, Henderson knew he was with ONI.

"They got you too?" asked Henderson.

"I'm here," was the simple reply. Obviously, the man wasn't very talkative.

"How?"

"They blew my cover."

"The whole platoon was defeated?"

"Mhmh."

"Do you believe that Earth's been captured? Is the Fleet destroyed?"

"I don't believe a word they are saying." It was the longest sentence he had said so far, but at least Henderson had his hopes renewed.

"Can you fight, officer?"

Henderson was startled. "What?"

"Are you trained for combat situations?"

"Yes sir, I'm SWAT, but why-"

"We're getting out of here. We're going to escape."

Henderson, having heard many bizarre stories about ONI spooks, had no doubt the man could free them. "But what will we do then?"

"I'm going to free as many combat personnel as I can. Then we'll fight a street war with the Imperials. We'll have to hold out till reinforcements arrive."

"Reinforcements?"

"Before I was captured, I learned that the 405th was on its way here. If we hold out long enough, we'll turn the tables on the invasion force."

"There aren't many of us left, sir. They slaughtered half of us before the chief surrenderedâ€|and was executed."

"It'll be enough." He took off his shoe and, making sure there were

no guards watching, he removed the sole. Hidden in the shoe was a tube of a Covenant acid that could burn through any metal. Careful not to allow it to touch his skin, he applied it on the lock and replaced it. The lock melted like hot butter, and the agent pushed the doors open. He removed the lace from one of his shoes and left. "Wait here."

Henderson heard nothing but silence for a few seconds, then the sound of a choked yell and a muffled thud.

"Come on out, officer," said the agent. "It's clear."

Henderson looked to see the mysterious man standing over the bodies of two troopers. He had used the lace as a garrote to kill one and cracked the other's neck with his bare hands.

"Grab this," said the spook, tossing him a blaster rifle. "But don't use it unless you absolutely have to; we don't want to alert everyone. Yet."

Henderson nodded, a grim look on his face. He followed the agent's lead. Several times, the spook told him to wait. When he followed, the room would have a couple of corpses in them. Henderson couldn't help but marvel at the man's skill. It would've taken his whole SWAT team to get this far—and they wouldn't be so quiet about it. He policed ammo and followed the agent, freeing inmates. Soon they had freed twenty. Under normal circumstances, twenty freed prisoners would create one hell of a racket, but the agent ordered them to be quiet. They split up, keeping silent as ghosts. The Agent, as Henderson called him, selected a few men: namely, SWAT members and Navy SEALs to assist in neutralizing the jailhouse and other Imperial headquarters. The Agent soon reached a door. He opened it a crack and looked outside. It was a parking lot. At the far end, there was an Imperial shuttle guarded by at least ten troopers.

The Agent motioned five men forward. They carried Imperial beam rifles, or sniper rifles. They picked targets and fired quickly. All ten troopers were dead in three seconds. Henderson knew that it would've ended up the other way around if he had led the SWAT team. They ran across the lot and into the shuttle.

"Everybody, find gunner positions," said the Agent. "We're not escaping. We're gonna use their own firepower against them."

**1912 hrs**

**New Mombassa Outskirts**

**Earth**

Imperial Lieutenant Erten killed the last ODS in the building with a quick headshot with his blaster pistol. As the soldier fell, a paper fluttered from his pocket. Erten picked it up. It read:

I am an ODS Helljumper, 105th

If you are an Imp recovering my body,

KISS MY COLD DEAD ASS!

Erten snorted in disgust and tossed the paper away. It was caught by a black-armored hand. Erten knew it was the hand of a Galactic Commando. This one was a clone of the leader of the Old Republic's Delta Squad, GC-1138. For some reason unknown to Erten, the clone had retained his predecessor's memories and insisted that his team mates call him 'Boss'. He also had an orange slash across his helmet.

1138 read the paper through his dark visor. "Looks like something I would've written in the Clone Wars."

"You would write something as barbaric and crude as that?"

"It's not 'barbaric'. These are the words of a patriotic soldier. It would've been nice if all of our men were the same. If it was that way, we would've won by now."

Erten snorted again. "You are wrong. It's that simple."

"Prove it," said a commando, this one with a red slash on his helmet. He was called Sev-1207.

"The simple fact that you are clones and I am not makes me right. You're not philosophers, you're mindless soldiers."

"You got something against clones?" said Sev, sounding a little threatening.

"Yes. They are inferior."

"Then how come we can complete missions faster and more efficiently than your non-clone Commandos?"

"Patrol the rooftop," said Erten, ignoring Sev, "And guard the transport."

Sev glared at the lanky officer. It was plain as the sun that the only thing keeping Erten alive and out of the Commando's death-grip was the fact that he was a superior.

"That was an order, _clone_."

GC-1138 put his hand on Sev's shoulder. "Secure the rooftop commando."

Sev nodded. "Yes sir." Without saluting Erten, he left.

"If that clone isn't careful," said Erten, "I'll have him executed. Make sure he doesn't put himself in that position. Do I make myself clear, GC-1138?"

Boss nodded stiffly. "Yes, sir." He saluted and went up the stairs.

Erten despised these clones. They acted like they had the right to be human. It wasn't logical. None of the stormtroopers acted this way. At least, none of the clone stormtroopers did. Suddenly, his comlink buzzed. "What is it?"

"_Sir, this is Squad two. We've come across Squad one, and they're all dead._"

"Dead?"

"_Yes sir. From the wounds, I guess they were killed by some sort of lightsaber. Also, it looks like they had no idea where to shoot; there are scorch marks all over the place. Be advised, there may be hostiles in the building."_

"Acknowledged." Erten put away the comlink and flicked the setting of his rifle to kill. It was then that a double blade of blue plasma appeared out of thin air and cut down both of his guards. An Elite in white armor appeared, followed by two others in jet-black. Erten reacted quickly and opened fire. Their shields flared silver, and the one in white slowly advanced on him, mandibles bared in a smile, heedless of the red bolts hitting him. Erten could feel something warm trickle down his legs.

GC-1138 'Boss' watched his team mate Sev sulk. He didn't like the lieutenant either, but there was no doubting that he was the superior officer. He glanced at his reflection in a nearby window. His suit resembled that of a scout trooper, only black and more advanced with shielding technology. He preferred his old armor, but he was told that Katarn-class armor was now considered obsolete. He watched as Fixer-1140 tried to reason with Sev.

"He is the commanding officer, Sev," said the commando with the green slash.

"I doubt you would've kept your temper if he'd said it to your face."

"I'd simply agree with him and pretend to listen."

"In other words, you're kissing hi-" Sev was suddenly interrupted by the sound of blaster fire over the lieutenant's com.

"_There are hostiles in the building! Delta Squad, be advi-Ahhhh!"
_The sound of a collapsing body was heard, followed by a deep, throaty chuckle.

"Sounds like trouble, Boss," said Scorch-1262. A yellow slash decorated his helmet.

"You think so?" said a sarcastic Sev. They all checked their DC-20 rifles.

Boss made a fist. "Delta Squad, forming up."

"Forming up, Boss."

The commandos took up positions and aimed at the stairwell door. Soon, a high-pitched cackle was heard, and a couple of black-armored Grunts ran out the door. They were cut down without mercy.

"Puny kriff," muttered Sev. Suddenly, another Grunt appeared, carrying what appeared to be a cannon.

"Evade!" yelled Boss. A green orb of energy slammed into the ground, peppering the commandos with bits of concrete. Fixer ran forward and slit the Grunt's throat. The creature flopped about on the ground for

a few seconds and stopped moving. Its phosphorent blue blood coated the ground.

"Nice hit, Fixer," said Sev. Just as he said that, a little blue glowing ball flew up the stairs and landed right next to Fixer. He jumped to the side just in time as the plasma grenade exploded. Fixer's shields flared an electric blue.

A strange sound came from the stairwell, a deep 'wortwortwort', and a black-clad Elite appeared. Blaster fire slammed into the alien from all sides, and the Elite fell with a horrible cry.

Sev smirked in his helmet. "I thought they were called 'Elites'. How disappointing." No sooner had he shut his mouth than a white-armored Elite appeared carrying an ignited plasma sword. He spotted Fixer approaching him and swung savagely at the commando.

"Bombard him, Deltas!" yelled Boss. Scorch threw a thermal detonator at the Elite's feet, but the creature jumped away with a snarl and avoided being cooked. When the smoke cleared, the Elite was nowhere to be seen.

"Stay ready, Delta Squad," barked 1138. Fixer dropped the two halves of his DC-20; the plasma blade had bisected it cleanly in half. He picked up a plasma rifle the first Elite had dropped. A black armored Elite tried to jump him, but a beam of blue put an end to the alien.

"Thanks oh-seven," said Fixer. Suddenly, the white armored Elite appeared on the scene. It warbled a challenge to Fixer and charged. The Commando kept a steady stream of plasma at the alien, but its shields held. It was right on top of Fixer now, so close that the other commandos couldn't fire on him without risk of hitting their comrade. The Elite raised the energy sword and was about to bring it down when Fixer grabbed his sword arm. The Elite snarled and applied more pressure. Slowly, but inexorably, the blade descended on Fixer's head. Suddenly, Scorch jumped next to Fixer and pushed back the Elite's arm. The blade halted, and the alien roared in anger.

"Sev!" yelled Boss, "Knife him now!"

"With pleasure." With that, the commando went behind the Elite and slit his throat, bringing the frantic fight to an abrupt and messy end.

Boss went up to the body. It was still twitching. "These guys are pretty good. Took three of us to take him out."

Fixer eyed the purple bars on the front of the blood-stained armor. "I think this is what Intel calls an 'Ultra' Elite. They command the SpecOps missions, like our advisors."

"Yeah, but our advisors wouldn't have the guts to come down here and fight," said Scorch. "they'd just sit in the ship, happy to safely guide us into mayhem."

"I'm not complaining," said Sev, "as long as I get to kill something."

Boss's comlink crackled. _"GC-1138? What is going on there? Why isn't

Lt. Erten responding?"_

"The lieutenant has been killed in action," replied the commando, "as well as the entire stormtrooper division under his command. We're all that's left, not counting the shuttle pilot."

"_I'm sorry to hear it. Erten was a good officer." _

Sev grumbled, "More like a pain in the-"

"Stow it, seven," growled Boss. "What should we do, sir?"

"_Report to General Veers. He's leading the attack on the inner city. He will give you an important mission. I can't tell you now; it's classified. Daala out."_

**A/N: Long chappie, eh? The chief will be back soon. And I hope ShotgunChief likes the including of the Commandos. **

17. Chapter 17: Victory and Defeat

**A/N: This is the second last chapter of this story, and I'm sorry to have to finish it so soon. If enough people ask me to, I'll make a sequel in which the Allies take the fight to the Imperials. Big Time. **

Chapter 16

**2000 hrs**

**Imperial Super Star Destroyer "Knight Hammer" **

**New Mombassa**

**Earth**

Admiral Daala stared at the view screen that was giving her a view from the bottom of her ship. She couldn't take her eyes off it; what was being shown was too amazing. A crater three miles in diameter held what appeared to be a large metal plate with intricate designs. For over the last two hours, fourteen giant metal teeth had been lifting themselves up, and sensors indicated that the circle of metal in the middle was gathering a lot of power. She knew the dangers of placing the _Hammer_ above the construct, but she wanted to create an illusion of the Empire overshadowing even the creations of the mighty Forerunner, as the prisoners called them. She had hoped that the image would lower morale among the Allied Army, but judging from the way they had been fighting, it had not worked. She switched the view to the bridge and looked up. Burning meteors represented wrecks of ships that had gone too close to the atmosphere, faint glowing balls of yarn represented drive glows of star fighters in looping dogfights, and long lines of energy and smoke indicated turbo laser charges, pulse lasers, plasma torpedoes, Archer missiles and MAC rounds. Through the clouds Daala could see the outlines of ships: the hard angles of UNSC ships and the MAC platforms, the smoother lines of Mon Calamari cruisers, tear-drop silver Covenant frigates and cruisers, and the wedge-shaped Imperial Star Destroyers. Even as she watched, an Imperial ship broke apart from the stress exerted by multiple MAC rounds, and the ship's tactical presence faded off the

battle monitors. The contest was far from one sided, however; a Halcyon-class cruiser was blown apart by a barrage of turbo laser batteries and a light Covenant carrier was consumed in a ball of fire. But for ships without shields and possessing primitive weaponry, the Earthers' navy was putting up a terrific fight. The comlink crackled to life, and the ghostly blue figure of Darth Vader appeared on the holotank.

"_Admiral Daala, prepare your ship for immediate departure. We have sustained heavy losses, and we must return to Imperial space by the order of the Emperor. I have no time for questions. In one hour, you must depart. Vader out."_

Daala wondered. How many losses did we sustain? Looking at the tactical display, a cold lump formed in her stomach; the Imperial Navy of eight hundred ships was reduced to less than half its size. Only three hundred and thirty-one ships were left. The Allied Navy, numbering five hundred, was beginning the process of containing the Imperial ships and preventing escape. She opened a channel to General Veers. "General? Evacuate your troops now."

"_But, admiral, Lord Vader-" _

"Lord Vader has just issued a new order. Evacuate your troops. You have one hour. Daala out."

"_Admiral, there is one more thing. Delta Squad has been captured."_

Daala frowned. The loss of Delta Squad was a blow, but not an important one. "Let them be, General. Remember, one hour only." She closed the link.

Her Glorious day was ruined.

**2005 hrs**

**UNSC Super Carrier "Abukir"**

**Sol system**

**Earth**

Fleet Admiral Terrence Hood was astounded. The Imperials were retreating! There were some reports that said the invaders were retreating to their ships, and many ships had already jumped. Not all of them, however. Hood had ordered the Master Chief to link up with his Spartans and board a Super Star destroyer and capture it. A ship like that would contain a lot of information that could work to the Allied advantage. To prevent the ship in question from escaping, he had ordered one of the Mon Calamari ships to bombard the ship with ion cannons so that the weapons were offline. Then he vectored in twelve cruisers and twenty Covenant destroyers to block off the Imperial ship's escape routes. As he watched the Imperial ship trapped in the midst of thirty-two warships, he noticed that a Covenant carrier had launched a flight of boarding craft. He knew that eight Spartans were among them.

Hood felt pity for the Imperial troops who would engage the Spartans in battle.

Covenant Boarding Craft

Spartan 117 rechecked the MA5B and the shotgun he carried. The Chief, satisfied with his firearms, checked the pins on the grenades hanging from his bandolier. The other occupants of the boarding craft, consisting of ten Marines, one Republic commander, five Grunts and three Elites, watched his lightning-fast moves with interest. Han Solo was particularly curious.

"Are you sure he isn't a droid?" he asked a Marine.

"What's a droid?"

Corporal Narively, unaware of the fact that the Spartan was listening, said "They aren't robots, if that's what you mean. They're justâ€¦" he paused, searching for the right word.

"Different."

The corporal started out of his seat; the Chief had just appeared behind him.

"Everybody, get ready. Thirty seconds till contact." The Chief turned to Solo. "Are you sure you want to come with us, sir? You are a high ranking officer, after all."

"Hey, it's not like I wanted to be a general. And besides, you'll need me to show you the way." Han whipped out his blaster gunslinger style. "This little baby has never failed me yet. I'll be alright."

The voice of the Elite pilot came over the vessel's speakers. "_We are within docking range of the enemy ship. Prepare for combat. May the gods protect you."_

The Elites and the humans muttered quick prayers while the vessel's blowtorches cut a hole on the hull of the Super Star Destroyer. There was a clang of metal on metal as the hole appeared, and a flash of white-booted feet.

The Chief threw a grenade and the Elites followed suit. Not frag grenades, which would have thrown shrapnel back at the boarders, but plasma grenades, which detonated in a bright blue flash. "Go go go!" yelled the Master Chief. He charged out of the airlock and into a black, polished corridor. The smoldering corpses of many stormtroopers littered the deck.

"That got their attention," said an Aussie marine. Just as the entire party exited, however, two blast doors closed off the corridor. They were trapped. "Cortana, we could use some help right now."

"_Working on it," _said the AI. "_There! I got it. And just in time, too; they were about to suck the air out of this compartment."_

"Thanks a bunch, Cortana," said Narively. He jogged after the Sergeant, who followed the Chief and General Solo. They progressed through the corridors, eliminating resistance. Finally, Solo signaled a stop.

"We should split up. The Marines will go one way while the Covenant soldiers come with us. If we approach the bridge from two directions, we'll have a greater chance of getting on the bridge."

So the group split. Sergeant Carter was sorry to see the Spartan go, but he was excited at the prospect of him gloriously leading his men into the enemy bridge. "Alright, you maggots, let's move!"

They seemed to be making good progress, when, half way to the bridge, they were attacked by two Imperial Dark Troopers who were fond of chucking grenades. By the time the frantic firefight was over, Carter was dead, a smoking hole in his chest.

One of the Marines looked at the body, then the corporal. "Looks like you got promoted."

Narively kicked the gray-armored body of the Dark Trooper. The Marine was right; with Carter dead, he was the ranking officer among these men. The Master Chief wouldn't have allowed them to halt, and he had a duty to carry out his orders. "We're continuing the mission. Check ammo and prepare to move out." He bent down, closed Carter's glassy eyes, and took his dog tags. They got to a 'T' junction, where a squad of troopers attempted to hit their flank.

"Covering fire!" yelled the corporal. BR55s and SMGs rattled while stormtroopers ran helter skelter, taking pot shots at the marines. Eventually, the superior training of the Marines prevailed and they got through, leaving behind three dead stormtroopers and a dead Marine. Narively had just enough time to scoop up the body, take the tags and leave.

"It could've been worse," said a Marine. "A lot worse."

The corporal tried not to think about it. "Let's get going." Progress was marked by more encounters with stormtroopers and Dark Troopers. Soon they reached a large blast door, where they linked up with the others. There were now two other Spartans besides the Chief, plus ten Marines and fifteen Grunts.

"Status, Corporal," barked the Chief.

"Sergeant Carter is KIA, sir, and so is another Marine. We have ten grenades between us, and about two clips of ammo for each of us."

"I'm sorry about your Sergeant, corporal. You did a fine job leading your boys here." He then addressed Cortana. "We need a way into the bridge."

"I'm sorry, Chief," said Cortana, "But all bridge functions have been localized to the bridge itself. You have to force your way in."

Solo shook his head. "Maybe I could hotwire this thing." He pried open the instrument panel, and fiddled around with it. "Yep, I think I got it." Another set of blast doors crashed down, and Han was greeted by stares of 'was that supposed to happen?'

"Let me see that," said Frederic-104. He rewired the panel, and the doors slid open, revealing an empty bridge.

"You guys wait here," said the Chief. "If this is a trap, then we'll spring it." He motioned to one of the Spartans, and the armored figure followed him in. The remaining Spartan remained stock still, peering into the bridge with his rifle ready.

The Chief knew it was a trap. The problem was, what kind of trap was it? As he heard the sudden whir of machinery, he groaned in realization; the auto- defense systems were coming online. He saw a turret, nearly the length and bore of a Jackhammer, pop from the ceiling. "Kelly!" he yelled, "Get out!"

Kelly-087 ran so fast, it seemed like she had teleported. She ran to the bridge doors and braced against the closing doors along with Fred. Total time elapsed: 0:02.

The Chief ran for it. In another three seconds, the turret identified him as a threat. In another second, it started firing while the Chief had another five meters to go. The first blast hit the ground near his feet, scorching the spotless deck and draining his shields by a quarter. The next caught him in the back, draining his shields and throwing him out of the bridge. He heard a bang as the bridge doors closed, and he saw his blood spattered on the inside of his visor. His mouth tasted like copper.

"You alright?" asked a concerned Solo. The Spartan's armor was leaking hydro-static gel and it was smoking slightly. Han was astonished to see the man get to his feet. "That turret would've vaporized a normal guy in a nanosecond."

The Spartan cocked his head quizzically. "I'm not a normal guy, sir."

"Do you think your AI can neutralize the auto defense grid?"

"I think I can," said Cortana, "if you put me into direct contact with the panel."

"Then why in all the Corellian hells didn't you say so before?"

_2130 hrs _

_UNSC High Command _

Sydney***

_Earth _

Boss-1138 sat in the middle of a large, dark room flanked by two Marines. Even though he was deprived of his helmet, he didn't need night vision to know that the entire command staff of the UNSC was sitting in the shadows, watching him. The only person he could see clearly was the black-uniformed officer standing in front of him. He tried to recollect how he was caught.

**Flashback **

_Sev took out the three Marines stationed in the hotel lobby while Scorch fragged another two on the balcony above. Things seemed to be normal. _

_"Advisor, we've secured the area," said Boss. As soon as he ended the transmission, all hell broke loose. _

_A green armored figure leapt down from the balcony, landing on his feet with out staggering a bit. Whatever it was, it was easily seven feet tall and scanned the lobby with a copper-colored reflective visor. It held no weapon. _

_"Delta Squad," barked Boss, "take him out!" Blue-colored bolts of energy slammed into the figure, only to dissipate against a golden energy shield. The thing moved with unnatural speed, running over to a dead Marine and snatching up his weapon. It fired two bursts at Fixer and ran into an adjacent room. Scorch tried to block him but was hit over the head with the thing's rifle. Scorch moaned and hit the floor. "Fixer, administer bacta to that commando. Oh-seven, come with me." He went into the room, but before, he had passed the door, he heard Fixer go 'oof!'. He turned around to see the thing standing over Fixer and Scorch. Then there was a blinding pain, then darkness.

_

**End Flashback **

The officer approached Boss. "Hello, there. I'm Colonel Hathaway, head of the Office of Naval Intelligence. Identify yourself."

"Go stuff yourself, you di'kut."

Hathaway raised an eyebrow and nodded to the Marines. One of them kicked him in the stomach and the other punched him in the face. They pulled him upright, blood streaming from his nose. Hathaway gave the commando a cold smile. "I would like it if you identify yourself."

"GC-1138."

"Please elaborate."

"I am a Galactic Commando of the Empire. I head De-"

"Delta Squad. Yes, we know. We've been able to eavesdrop on Imperial communications. What we don't know is what you were doing in Hotel Zanzibar. What was your mission there?"

At this, Boss kept quiet. He wasn't about to reveal classified information.

Hathaway walked up to the commando, placing his face an inch away from the prisoner's. "I try not to hurt my prisoners, but if I have to I will cut off your limbs one by one, starting with your fingers. That also includes yourâ€|extremities. Do not force me to make that decision. Do you understand, soldier?"

Boss looked the man in the eyes and saw that he really meant it. This man would have made Lt. Erten wet himself. "My mission was to track down a group of enemy soldiers known as 'Spartans' to Imperial Intelligence. We were to lay a trap for them and take them out. They

had inflicted heavy casualties on Imperial troops, so this mission was a top priority."

There were murmurs floating about the room. Hathaway paid no attention to them. "You have confirmed what the other squad leader has said, so I guess you have been telling us the truth."

"The other squad leader, sir?"

"A group of individuals designated as Omega Squad attempted to board a Covenant carrier via one Imperial boarding craft. They were intercepted by a patrol cutter and captured. Their objective was to sabotage the ship so that the Super Star Destroyer Lusyanka could escape. By doing so, they could also eliminate the Spartans aboard that vessel." He directed his last comment to the guards. "Take him to his cell, and make sure no one harms him."

After the prisoner was gone, Hathaway faced the command staff. One of them stood up and addressed him. It was Admiral Hood. "Son, all of the eight surviving Spartans were on board that carrier. Who captured Delta Squad?"

Hathaway smiled. "Sir, you mean all of the eight surviving Spartan-****twos** ****were** on that carrier."

****A/N:**This chapter is shorter than it would've should've been, but I'm satisfied. ******

18. Chapter 18: Trials and Plans

Chapter 18

****0930 hrs****_

****UNSC High Command****_

****Sydney****_

****Earth****_

Hood waited impatiently for Hathaway to appear in his office. When he did, the office doors flashed shut and locked. He looked at the ONI agent. "You've got a lot of guts, James, pulling off what you did. Who gave you authorization to reactivate the Spartan-IIIs?"

"No one, sir."

"Then why did you do it?"

"The Ark was in serious danger. The II series was in orbit, too far away to recall. Having no other alternative, I reactivated them."

Hood locked eyes with the Colonel. "You know what happened last time. You know what happened when we tried to put them in cryo storage. The lab was nearly destroyed!"

Hathaway shrugged. "Then the only solution is not to put them in cryo."

Hood sighed explosively. "Keep them busy. Make them plan strategies, play board games: anything that will keep them occupied. If anything happens, it's gonna be your ass."

"I understand, sir."

"Dismissed."

**1100 hrs**

Lieutenant Illia Daala sat chained to a chair in the middle of a dark, semi-circular room. She was on trial for war crimes she had committed. Her judges sat in the shadows, barely visible. One of them spoke through a mike.

"State your name, rank and affiliation," he said in a gravelly voice.

She considered not saying anything, but she decided that wouldn't be the best of ideas. "Illia Daala, First Lieutenant in the Imperial Army of the Galactic Empire. I was last stationed with a small unit of the 182nd Legion on Agra-II."

"Who were you stationed with on Chiron TL34?"

"I was attached to the 501st Legion, also called 'Vader's Fist'."

"Do you know what you are accused of, Lieutenant? Murphy, read the charges."

Whoever was Murphy read the charges in a loud, toneless voice.

"Lieutenant Daala is accused of two accounts of mass murder and two hundred and twenty-five accounts of inhuman torture, seventy-three of which have resulted in death. The first account is the execution of one hundred and twenty-two Marine and Navy personnel, among who can be found Rear Admiral Watts. The next was the murder of fifteen hundred unarmed civilians killed by orbital bombardment."

The man with the gravelly voice spoke up. "Do you deny these charges?"

"I don't deny that I killed the non-civilians, but the orbital bombardment was ordered by Lord Vader in retribution. Some natives had taken up arms against us."

"You didn't make efforts to apprehend the perpetrators?"

"No."

"Instead, you told Lord Vader that the **entire** civilian population had taken up arms. In turn, he destroyed a large number of people that you would otherwise have to take care of. Am I correct?"

Daala tried to feign outrage. "Who told you this pack of lies?"

The man chuckled. "When you abandoned Chiron, you forgot about two PoWs that were still alive. They were privy to your end of

communications, seeing that you had placed them in a cell in your office."

"He's a liar."

"He may have lied to you, but that was his duty. He wouldn't lie to his own superiors. Ah, I see that the Council has reached a decision. What is the verdict?"

"We find the lieutenant guilty on all charges. The sentence is death."

The last word rang in Daala's ears like a gong, and she started to shake uncontrollably with fear. That didn't prevent the Marine bodyguards to take her away while she gibbered.

Admiral Harper and Admiral Freemont watched from a darkened viewing area as the prisoner was dragged away.

"It was hardly a fair trial," said Freemont.

"It was as fair as the one she gave to Watts, if not more," replied Harper. "Though I doubt ONI's shenanigans will convince the general public. Let's get the hell out of here; we've got work to do."

All around Earth, UNSC patrol cutters searched for survivors while Covenant Scavengers collected scrap metal to be towed to the shipyards on Mars. There was certainly no lack of scrap metal; over five hundred ships were destroyed in the battle. All over UNSC controlled space and Earth, however, morale was high. The Allies had taken the Empire's best shot, and came out standing. One hundred enemy craft had been captured and the Covenant Engineers were hard at work painting them with different patterns. They would soon be added to the Allied Fleet and some would be presented to those captains and others who had lost ships. Twenty-five thousand enemy troops had been taken prisoner and piles of weaponry recovered for testing.

The Imperial occupation of Athens, though short, was brutal, and the officer in charge nearly wiped out the entire civilian population in response to guerilla resistance. When the 405th arrived, half of the city was in ruins. But the innocent lives that were lost were avenged. An unnamed ONI officer in charge of the resistance disappeared shortly after UN forces secured the city. The Imperial commander was lynched by a few civilians while trying to escape.

New Mombassa did not suffer as badly as Athens, but damage had occurred. Luckily, most of the civilian population had been evacuated before the Imperial attack. The Ark suffered no damage, thanks to the efforts of Covenant and UNSC forces.

New Republic ground troops played only small roles in the Battle for Earth. However, Rogue Squadron was credited with destroying two Star Destroyers and was also responsible for providing escorts to the UNSC Abukir. The Mon Calamari cruisers were credited with destroying forty-three Star Destroyers and disabling twenty more.

The Hand of Justice rebellion was brutally suppressed by the Covenant and the twenty ships they had captured were destroyed. It is believed that the Brutes, Drones and Jackals were completely wiped

out.

Imperial forces in New Mumbai on Agra-II surrendered when news reached them of the disastrous outcome of the Battle for Earth. This was a good thing for the Allied forces in the city; Imperial forces were slowly gaining the upper hand, and the Allies had suffered many casualties.

Allied High Command (AlCom) started work on a new campaign, codenamed Operation Mars, which would take them into Imperial space. Though they knew the dangers involved, they were ready to risk them, if only to rid the galaxy of the terror that was the Empire.

**The End**

Credits

Bungie

For making a kickass game

Lucas Films

For creating Star Wars

Don113

Story line

ShotgunChief

Her fanfic was what inspired this story

SpartanCommander

For help in specific chapters

And last, but by no means the least, all my faithful readers and reviewers

**Auf Wiedersein!**

Stay tuned for a teaser of my next ficâ€¦

19. Sneak Peek

Sneak Peek of "Halo: Rise of the Jedi"

There was a momentary flash of bright white light as the Prowler exited the non-Einstienian, non-Euclidean realm of Slipspace. The man sitting inside, Lt. Joseph Walker, unbuckled his harness and floated in zero-G to the side windows to peer at the planet he had arrived at.

The planet, according to New Republic intel, was called 'Kamino'. The inhabitants were apparently very thin, very tall, very gracefulâ€¦and responsible for creating and maintaining the Empire's clone army. The rains, according to Walker's computer, would make Earth's monsoons look like drizzles. There was no land to be seen, but the Kaminoans

lived in cities above the monstrous waves. These cities consisted of multiple platforms and buildings set upon highly strengthened pillars that could withstand the pounding from the ocean.

Walker frowned. There was no way that drop pods could be used here, unless AlCom wanted the ODSTs to explore the sea bed. They had to send in the Marine Assault Landers. It would be a definite pain in the ass-anti aircraft fire would definitely take out many of the MALs-but there was no other choice. One thing working in the Allies' favor was that only twenty Star Destroyers were guarding the planet, something Walker considered odd for a planet responsible for creating three-quarters of the Imperial Grand Army. Maybe the Imperials thought that the Allies wouldn't travel so far.

An alarm beeped for Walker's attention; a TIE scout was approaching, and he had to get his ass out of there fast. He strapped himself in and engaged the maneuvering thrusters. The small puffs of energy would be sufficient enough to move him out of sensor range of the scout ship. Soon, the scout passed, not noticing the piece of shadow a football field's length away.

Once the TIE was a safe distance away, Walker busied himself flying the Prowler as far away from Kamino as he could. Five hours later, Walker engaged the Shaw-Fujikawa Mark-V engines and the Prowler jumped into Slipspace.

End
file.